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# MURFREESBORO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Publication No. 25



Captain Bromfield L. Ridley



SUMMER 1985

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Cover Photo:

Captain Bromfield L. Ridley

member Lt. General A. P. Stewart's Staff

Army of Tennessee

Ridley was born in Rutherford County,

Tennessee near the Jefferson Community

Ridley was the author of:

Journal of B. L. Ridley

Lt. General A. P. Stewart's Staff

C.S.A.

Battles and Sketches

Army of Tennessee

1861-1865

Ridley's Journal was published in 1906

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PUBLICATION NO. 25

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LEGENDS AND STORIES OF CIVIL WAR  
RUTHERFORD COUNTY

by

Homer Peyton Pittard

Master of Arts' Thesis  
George Peabody College for Teachers  
August 1940

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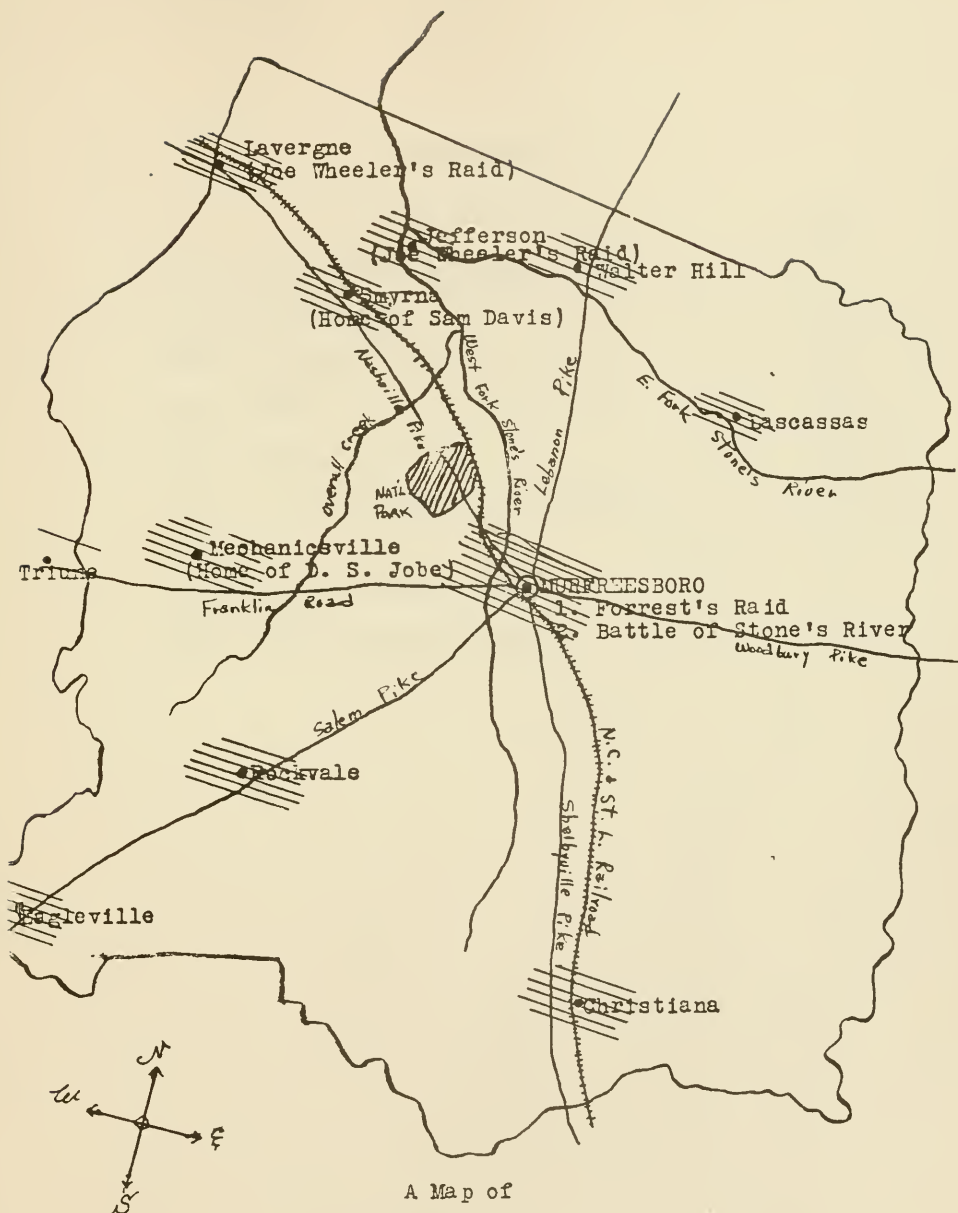
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A Map of  
RUTHERFORD COUNTY  
in Civil War Times





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## CHAPTER I

### THE CIVIL WAR IN RUTHERFORD COUNTY

Geographically, Rutherford County is located in the exact center of the state of Tennessee. It is a fact that the center of the state is less than two miles from the Rutherford County courthouse, and this center is a flat rock about three acres in extent, practically bare of vegetation of any character. This spot was once a popular picnic ground because of its close proximity to town, and its level spaciousness.

The county has an area of about 580 square miles, and has about 6,000 farms with an average of seventy acres to the farm. The county is practically encircled by a chain of foothills, ranging from an altitude of 570 feet to 1,352 feet above sea level.

Rutherford County was organized by an Act of the General Assembly then in session at Knoxville, on October 25, 1803, but the organization was not complete until January 3, 1804. The territory now comprising the county was originally a part of Davidson County. At that time the state had only three members of the Lower House of Congress, the districts being known as the Washington, the Hamilton, and the Mero district, this county being in the last named.

The county was named in honor of General Griffith Rutherford, a Revolutionary officer who had been active in the Indian wars in this section of the country. He commanded a force of frontiersmen who served in small protective groups against forays of bands of Indian warriors.

Stone's River, upon whose banks and in whose vicinity was fought one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, was discovered by Uriah Stone in 1776. He explored it as far as Jefferson.

A donation of sixty acres in the center of the county, north of "Murfree Spring Branch," by William Lytle in 1811 resulted in the organization of the present county seat, Murfreesboro. The selection of this spot came after a prolonged debate and cross-firing between various sections of the county. Today, Murfreesboro, according to the 1940 census, has a population of 9,513. It is ideally located for the seat of government, lying practically in equal radius from all county extremities. Good roads radiate from this hub, making the center a short drive from any section.

Today, Murfreesboro is the prototype of other small southern towns. There is the square, the historic courthouse, and the Confederate Monument. There are the long tree-canopied streets stretching out and rarifying in the scattered suburbs. There is the Main Street, with its

doughty mansions of Civil War days, where "Room and Board" signs now appear unexpectedly and Neon Tourist Homes smack of anachronism in the bosom of aristocracy. Here, once, Bedford Forrest charged up the sleeping avenue at the head of a yelling cavalry to surprise a Yankee garrison. Murfreesboro is truly pro-southern, and even today when so much water has passed over the dam, the culture of ante-bellum and rebellion days still remains like a poignant dream in the minds of the people who have heard and have seen.

Murfreesboro with its surrounding undulating plain served as a remarkably well-chosen setting for the tragedy of Rosecrans and Bragg enacted on December 30, 31, 1862, and January 1, 1863.

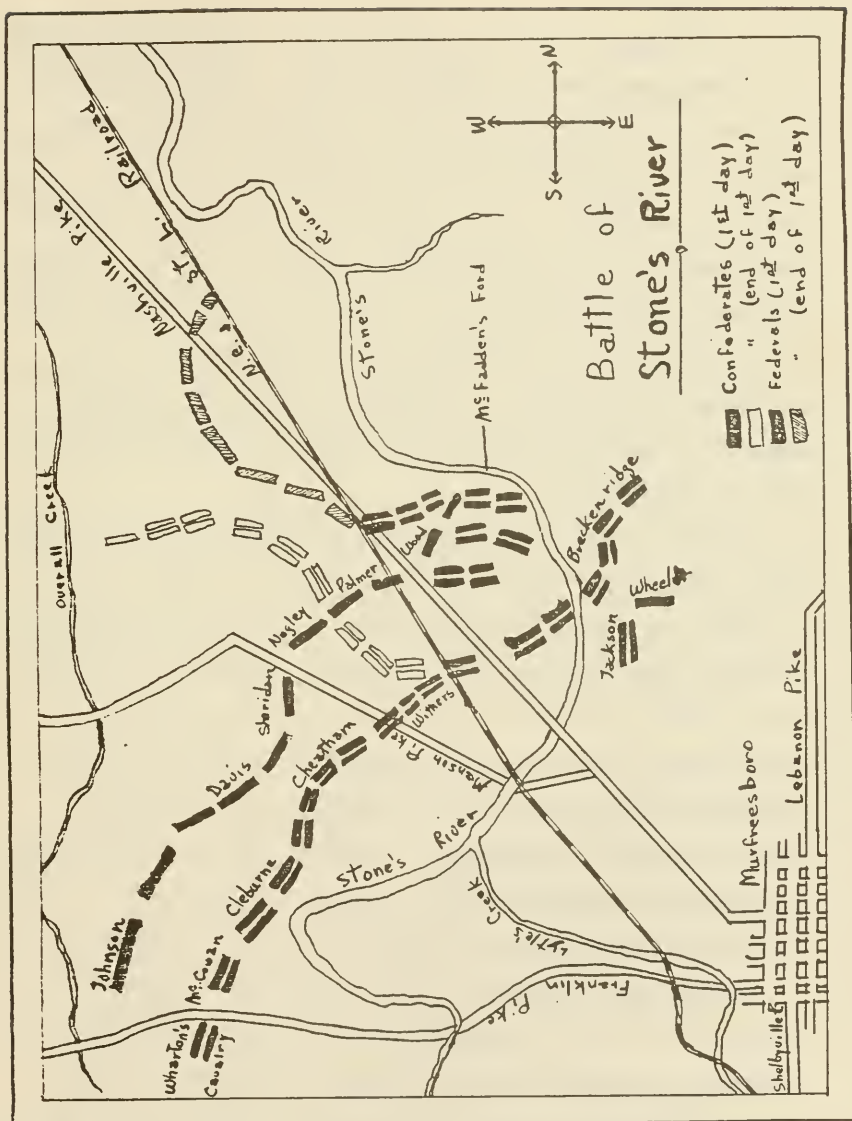
The official report of any battle by a military technician is often devoid of any color or picturesqueness. Military terminology is bereft of life except as it deals with killed and wounded and number engaged. It is not the purpose here, primarily, to give an official report of the Battle of Stone's River, often spoken of as the Battle of Murfreesboro. Nor, does this present report necessarily vouch for the historical, official authenticity of anything herein given. The material here gathered merely relates the story of events as this has been given by veterans and other individuals who, in 1940, assume to

know. There are also interspersed a few quotations from published sources that may aid in vivifying the course of events.

### The Battle of Stone's River

The opposing generals of this battle were General Braxton Bragg of the Army of Tennessee, Confederate, and General William S. Rosecrans of the Army of the Cumberland, Union. Both had had their baptism of fire, and had proved themselves capable and efficient commanders. They had not before met each other on the field, and each went into the battle with eagerness and expectation of success.

The Confederate Army of Tennessee, after retreating from Kentucky, had been reorganized and heavily reinforced at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. It was well established that this town occupied a strategic position in the control of Middle Tennessee and ultimately a possibility of controlling Tennessee in its entirety. States to the north, also, would be vulnerable to a Confederate attack if the strong position at Murfreesboro were held by Bragg. Murfreesboro was a key to East Tennessee where Union sympathizers were clamoring for deliverance. It was no wonder that Rosecrans wished to dislodge the well-ensconced command at Murfreesboro. Besides, good roads radiated in every direction and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, a vital artery, bisected



the position. A control of the railroad would mean control of certain supplies and communications. Middle Tennessee had not as yet suffered from the ravages of war, consequently the surrounding country afforded a wealth of untouched supplies. It is said that on December 13, 1862, the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, visited the Army at Murfreesboro and remained with it several days. It is probable that he realized the importance of the position at that town. A success here for the Southern Cause would make possible a new attempt to annex Kentucky to the Confederacy.

At the close of the Kentucky campaign in the fall of 1862, the Union Army of the Cumberland was rapidly concentrated at Nashville, thirty-two miles from Mufreesboro. Rosecrans had relieved Buell from the command. Nashville was a logical military base for an operation against Chattanooga, which was acknowledged to be one of the most important positions in the Confederacy and a gateway to East Tennessee and Georgia. Realizing the importance of the control of Murfreesboro, General Rosecrans on December 26, 1862 began a movement toward that town.

Bragg was cognizant at all times of his enemy's movements, and he dispatched cavalry units under Joe Wheeler and John Morgan to harass the advance. By the evening of December 29 the Federal Army had reached the



northern outskirts of Murfreesboro. After a number of skirmishes with the Confederate cavalry, they assumed a position stretching westward from Stone's River, at McFadden's Ford, to the banks of Overall Creek.

Bragg's strong defensive position presented an extended line almost parallel with Stone's River, which ran in a northeasterly direction in front of the town of Murfreesboro. Bragg had divided his army into two corps. One of these was commanded by Lieutenant-General Leonidas Polk, who had the name of being Bragg's pet aversion. Polk's corps formed the left wing, and the right wing was under the command of Lieutenant-General William J. Hardee. Beginning with the left wing and transversing to the right wing were divisions under the following commands: McGowan, Cleburne, Cheatham, Withers, and Breckenridge. The latter was on the east side of the river.

Approximately one hundred yards away, within shouting distance, were the Federals, in lines almost parallel to the Confederates. Rosecrans, too, had divided his army into right and left wings, for convenience designated as corps. The right wing was under the command of Major-General McHowell McCook, and the left wing was under the command of Major-General Thomas L. Crittenden.

In war-council that evening the two opposing generals planned their attack. Bragg instructed his command to begin

hostilities at daylight the following morning, his left wing under Cleburne to attack Johnson's division under McCook. Cleburne was then to drive the right wing of the enemy back to the Nashville Pike, meanwhile being strongly supported by the center. Johnson's division was supposed to be the weakest point in the opposing line. The strategy thus planned was intended to flank and completely rout Rosecrans and destroy his army. By a peculiar quirk of circumstances, Rosecrans planned an identical attack. He planned a movement upon the Confederate right, hoping to drive them back beyond Murfreesboro, and thus give him command of the town. Coincidentally, the hour of attack was approximately the same.

That night the armies faced each other across the short stretch, watching the campfires and the dark silhouettes of cedars.

Just before daylight the Confederate camp stirred. The men were quietly examining their arms and fixing bayonets. Cartridge belts were replenished, and the officers felt of their horse pistols. The order was to move silently through the broken woods. Through breaks in the low cedars, the Confederates saw the Union camp moving around in the lethargy of early morning. Their rifles were stacked, and the Rebels could even smell their breakfast cooking over the fires. Down to the right of the Confederates were some

men watering horses. The proximity of the gray host was not as yet realized. In a few moments, however, they were apprehended. A shout rang out, and the encampment suddenly seized their arms, but too late. The order to charge was given and the stealthy Confederates charged almost in solid ranks out of the cedars. Consternation and confusion were everywhere. The Federals tried to form a line of battle. Arms were quickly snatched up and discharged. Finally, the scattered lines broke and fell back rapidly in disorder. The Confederates pressed on, forcing the enemy back until the Nashville Turnpike was reached. Here a stubborn resistance was met. Support from Rosecrans' left wing came to Johnson's aid. For the remainder of the day this was the battleground. Charges and countercharges were made by each army. Brickham gives a vivid picture of the storm as it broke upon the Federal camp:

The din of battle swelled rapidly. Its volume increased, and it seemed sweeping "nearer, clearer, deadlier than before." It could not be! This must be hallucination! It cannot be disaster! No tidings yet! Wiles and a comrade were sent to the right to observe and report. They galloped across the field and plunged into the forests. Directly a tide of fugitives poured out of the thickets--negroes, teamsters, and some soldiers. You have seen cinders from burning buildings flying when the conflagration was invisible. You could hear the roaring flames and crackling beams. Seeing the cinders you would say, "there is a fire." You have observed broken twigs and leaves whirling in the air when there was a roar of mighty winds in the forest. You had not yet felt the blast, but its avant

couriers were unmistakable. You said, "a tornado is coming." There was a conflagration, a tornadeo, now rushing through the forests in front, raging forward with vengeful fury. These teamsters, negroes, soldiers, flying before it were cinders, twigs, leaves, fugitives from the flames and tornado of battle.

"What is the matter? Why do you run?" Many push on heedless of stern questioning. A cocked pistol brings a squad to halt. "We are beaten! The Right Wing is broken! The rebel cavalry is charging the rear! The enemy is sweeping everything before them! General Sill is killed! Edgerton's Battery and part of Goodspeed's are captured!" Incredible! But few soldiers, thank God! in that panic-stricken mob, and most of them cling to their muskets. The negroes, poor souls, had cause for fright. The enemy murdered them as if they were beasts of prey. Wiles gallops back to report. His comrade moves further on, and meets straggling multitudes. The awful uproar increases and stretches swiftly now to the left. Bullets are clipping the twigs overhead and chipping the bark from trees. Heavy drops which precede a thunder storm seem to be falling on the dead leaves.<sup>1</sup>

As darkness settled down over the field, the din of battle lessened and finally subsided. Both armies were exhausted, and they rested on their arms in their new positions. That night in a war council, Rosecrans suggested a possible retreat, it is said. Thomas, one of Rosencrans' commanders, had fallen in a doze during the talking, but he awoke when the unpleasant words were uttered. "Retreat!" he exclaimed. "This army can't retreat!"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. B. Brickham, Rosecrans' Campaign with the Fourteenth Army Corps (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys & Co., 1863), pp. 207-08.

<sup>2</sup>W. J. Vance, Stone's River (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1914), p. 57.

The possibility of retreat was avoided, and the Federals determined to hold the new position, as it was stronger than the former. The following is a version of the war council of the Federals, held after the first day of battle:

At Stone's River, during the evening of December 31, several of the generals of the Army of the Cumberland assembled at the headquarters of the commander-in-chief. It was a momentous occasion. Our right wing, comprising more than one-third of our whole force, has been driven back with great loss. The generals arrived after dark at the tent of their commander, near the torn and bloody battleground, yet reeking with the dead. Each reported as to the status of his forces, and then, after other brief remarks of a personal character, conversation gradually subsided. General Rosecrans was the most conversational and cheerful, and had a smile and a pleasant word for all. Excepting himself and General Thomas and Van Cleve our commanders are young in years, and to most of them this was their first, and to all their greatest battle. Hence, their gravity and reticence--as certainly became them--upon this occasion. It was noticeable that they volunteered no opinions as to the best course for the morrow, whether to attempt to hold the present ground, to advance, or to retreat to Nashville. The supply trains had been sent back to that city during the day by the general commanding, to relieve them from the horde of Rebel cavalry. Thus left almost empty-handed, retreat to Nashville, even during that night if necessary, was a course not entirely beyond reason, the enemy's superior force and nearness to his supplies considered.

If any of our generals at this conference had such thoughts or opinions, they certainly would not have advanced them. It was a time and occasion--a turning point--that rarely happens in a lifetime or century. Even the sage General Thomas, now calm and placid in manner as summer eve, waited to hear from his chief, and a stiffness pervaded the assembly until General Rosecrans broke the spell.

"Gentlemen," said he, and the substance of his remarks is given from recollection, "we have come

out to fight and win this battle, and WE SHALL DO IT. True, we have been a little mixed up today; but we won't mind that. The enemy failed in all his attempts after we found what he was driving at. Out supplies may be short, but we will have out our trains again tomorrow. We will keep right on, and eat corn for a week but what we win this battle. WE CAN AND WILL DO IT!"

As the general advanced in his remarks, he became the more warmly in earnest. The effect of his words upon his officers was marked and exhilarating. All restraint was at once removed, now that their course was fully settled, and plans for the morrow soon engaged general attention.

Candor requires us to state that in all probability, had General Rosecrans determined differently, had he upon this occasion taken a darker view of the situation and whispered words of caution and favored a prudential retreat, our army would have fallen back ingloriously behind the forts at Nashville, and thus, unquestionably, Tennessee and Kentucky would not be as they are today, entirely free from rebel armies, and the Gulf states threatened from the West, but on the contrary, they would now be the strongest sections of the so-called Southern Confederacy. Is there any impropriety, then, we ask, in classing this instance with those recorded in the world's history, where one master-spirit has saved an army and made a successful campaign, and thus proven himself a prominent instrument in solving the destiny of his country.<sup>3</sup>

The following day, January 1, 1863, there was little activity, except sporadic engagements by cavalry units against supplies and wagon trains. Bragg was jubilant over the success of the first day's fighting, so much so that he flashed a message to Richmond, "God has granted us a happy New Year!"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Fitch, Annals of the Army of the Cumberland (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1864), pp. 676-77.

<sup>4</sup> Vance, p. 10.

At four o'clock on the afternoon of the next day, January 3, the second and last engagement in the Battle of Stone's River took place. Bragg chose again to take the offensive. He noticed the Union detachment that had been thrown across the river in Breckenridge's front, and he now determined to dislodge it. This was the Confederate right facing the Union left. Reinforcing Breckenridge, he ordered the advance. The Federals under Beatty fell back under superior force and finally fled across the river pursued by the enemy. The Confederates pushed on crossing the river at a shallow breach called McFadden's Ford. Scrambling up the bank on the opposite side they continued the rapid advance. But an error in judgment, either by Breckenridge or because of the impetuosity of the pursuing men carried the charge too far, much to their ultimate sorrow. They found themselves in an open field, unprotected by cavalry or by cannonade fire from Bragg's artillery.

On an eminence some three hundred yards away, were posted fifty-eight Federal guns. These rained a withering fire into the advancing ranks. Line after line was decimated, until a retreat was ordered. The Confederates fell back across the river, shattered and demoralized, leaving over seventeen hundred men dead and dying. The river itself was choked with bodies and ran red with blood.



Undoubtedly, this was the decisive engagement of the battle, for twenty-four hours later, on January 3, 1863, Bragg retreated, leaving his dead to be buried by the enemy.

The importance of the outcome of this battle is great. Yet few historians have given it recognition. Vance, in his Stone's River, has this to say of the battle:

It was at Stone's River that the South was the very pinnacle of confidence and warlike power, and it was here that she was halted and beaten back, never again to exhibit such strength and menace. It was a battle that marked the turning point of the war. To the people of the two sections, it seemed at the time but another Shiloh--horrifying, saddening, and bitterly disappointing.<sup>5</sup>

It is the contention of authorities today that had Bragg chosen to take the defensive instead of the offensive, he might have held his position indefinitely. Furthermore, he knew the ground, and most of the Federals certainly did not. It is said, for instance, that very few of the Federals knew the correct name of the stream upon whose banks they fought.

#### Joe Wheeler at Lavergne

While the battle was raging at Murfreesboro, cavalry units under Wheeler and Wharton were attacking the rear of the enemy, capturing wagon trains and picking up stragglers

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<sup>5</sup>Vance, p. 10.



from Rosecrans' army. In this era the cavalry units were practically the backbone of the army, the tentacles that reached out into the unknown country and tested the strength of an adversary. This military department has been aptly nicknamed the "eyes and ears" of the army. It was in the battle of Murfreesboro that the cavalry came into action.

One of the skirmishes well-known locally as a part of the Battle of Stone's River was the attack of Joe Wheeler's cavalry on a Federal garrison at Lavergne. Lavergne is a small village in the northwest extremity of the county and lies at the emergence of the Nashville Turnpike and the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad. It had devolved into an important position because it offered a key to communication through the two thoroughfares. Wheeler, with about three thousand men, was dispatched to dislodge the garrison and open the communication or else destroy it. The Federals, said to be a part of the Michigan Engineers and Mechanics, had taken a position behind an improvised cedar brush barricade on an elevation to the rear of the village. Wheeler stormed up the acclivity and demanded an immediate surrender. This was refused and a charge was made upon the position. Time after time the charges were repulsed. The Confederates became enraged and dashed their horses against the flimsy brush fence, which was only shoulder-high, in an attempt to crush it. Behind the

barricade, the Federals fired and reloaded with precision. Finally, Wheeler despaired and ordered a retreat. The cavalry soon disappeared in the cedar thickets, leaving about fifty dead and wounded. The Federals came out from their position and after surveying the bloody mass of men and horses began the gruesome task of burial.

#### Rosecrans' Post Battle Headquarters

After the Battle of Stone's River, Rosecrans had his headquarters in the heart of Murfreesboro. He took possession of the Keeble residence. A search has been made for the old home, but it has been found that the house was torn down a number of years ago. Mr. Sam Mitchell, veteran, remembers it as do others of advanced age. It was a fine, two-story, country-town house, with a large, pretty garden attached. Its owner was a lawyer, county clerk, and secessionist, and held a position in the Confederate Army. The old timers claim that Keeble attached himself to Bragg when the latter evacuated Murfreesboro in retreat toward Tullahoma. His wife and smallest children joined him. On Monday, following Bragg's search for quieter fields, Rosecrans entered the deserted house and set up headquarters. The house was said to have been filled with family goods and even the kitchen was well supplied. Also, this bounteousness was easily matched by the presence of a number of

young Africans left behind in the sudden departure of the owner. As most of the African contingent was of young feminine gender, Rosecrans thought it expedient to see that they were hastily removed. It was said that Rosecrans and his staff remained in this house ten days recuperating from the strenuous activity of Stone's River.

### Brickhouse Hospital

One can imagine the tasks of any surgeon in the wake of a battle with the proportions of Stone's River. With the thousands of piled on the ground, moaning and crying in anguish, some slowly dying from loss of blood, the surgeons did what they thought practical and expedient after a hurried analysis. Considering that a great number of the surgeons were young men, snatched prematurely from medical schools, it was small wonder that many of the badly wounded joined their dead comrades by way of the operating table. A description of Brickhouse Hospital, set up after the Battle of Murfreesboro, gives a ghastly picture of a field hospital. This hospital was located in the center of the battlefield to facilitate easy access to the wounded.

Those who witnessed surgical operations at the "Brickhouse Hospital" during and after the battles of Stone's River will never forget many of those scenes. There were headquarters for cases requiring amputation. Human limbs and pieces of flesh were cast outside of the house, through the windows, and the amount would have filled a cart. The floors of

the premises ran rivers of blood, and the surgeons and attendants, in their long dress and appearance resembled butchers at work in the shambles. The long line of graves, of both Union and Rebels, now coursing down the sloping field behind the Brickhouse Hospital attest the many sad results of battle, in which these humane and skillful efforts to save were unavailing. The picture we have drawn is harrowing to the soul; but it needs be thus brought home that we may realize the deepest and most terrible ordeal of the army surgeon.<sup>6</sup>

### Fort Transit

About eight miles from Murfreesboro on the Woodbury Pike, Mother Earth has fostered a mammoth wart on her ample bosom. It is an imposing hill rising majestically over the surrounding countryside. Sometime in the far distant past, it was given the name of Pilot Knob. People motoring along the pike now can see the smooth sides reaching to the summit where clusters a luxuriant tuft of trees. Down on the other side, obstructed from view, is a large apple orchard planted there by some industrious primeval. Old timers questioned about the history of the spot will tell you that it was a very important place during the Civil War.

After Rosecrans had won the battle of Stone's River, he set about hooking up some signal stations over the county. The cupola of the courthouse at Murfreesboro was

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<sup>6</sup>Fitch, p. 292.

chosen as the central station, with auxiliary stations at Lavergne, Triune, and Pilot Knob.

The Yankees had selected a gigantic elm, whose limbs reached far above the other trees, as the ideal spot for the signal platform. Here, during the day, the people in the neighborhood far below could see the little wig-wag flags spelling out a code to the courthouse eight miles away. Sometimes the flags would be red with a white center; again they would be white with red centers. It is said that the weather conditions had something to do with the color selection. Then at night, torches kept up the endless wagging. The Yankees termed the station, "Fort Transit."

Today, people seeing the huge mound, like an inverted ice cream cone, remark about its unusual shape. The settlers in the low country don't mind the size so much, except when they climb up its sides to pick blackberries or apples in the fall.

#### Forrest's Birthday Party

Today Murfreesboro citizens point with pride to the minie ball marks in the walls of the old courthouse. The jagged holes are reminiscent of a misty July morning seventy-eight years ago when Nathan Bedford Forrest charged up East Main Street and captured a garrison of

drowsy-eyed Yankees. The story is prevalent. No Jeff Davis birthday speech is complete without recounting it in its full resplendence. No loyal sons and daughters of the Gray Army fail to use it as a theme in their formal gatherings.

Bedford Forrest comes down to present Murfreesboro, through story and legend, as a conquering cavalier, a gracious, hard-riding, fire-eating Southern hero. Arguments are projected that if Jeff Davis had recognized the military genius in Forrest, and had not been blinded by the petty thrusts of jealousy by Braxton Bragg, the South might have fared better in the war. People with Union sentiment call Forrest the "Butcher," reminiscent of the massacre at Fort Pillow where hundreds of negroes were slaughtered.

The appearance of Forrest in Murfreesboro, on July 13, 1862, was in compliance with an order by General Beauregard, then in Alabama. It was necessary to dislodge the garrison of Federals occupying Murfreesboro in order to open communications by railroad between East Tennessee and Nashville. Forrest, because of his conspicuous service in Kentucky and at Fort Donelson, was chosen for the task. He left Tupelo in June, 1862, and proceeded to Rock Martins, near McMinnville. Here he assembled his various commands consisting of Terry's Rangers under Colonel Wharton, the Second Texas Regiment under Colonel Lawton, a Georgia batalion

under Lieutenant-Colonel Morrison, and a squadron under Colonel Baxter Smith. The entire force consisted of about one thousand men. After sending out reliable scouts and discovering that Murfreesboro was garrisoned by about two thousand men, Forrest held his first council of war. As a result of the conference, it was determined to make a descent on Murfreesboro, and on Saturday, July 18, 1862, the movement began. The following excerpt relates the origin of the "Birthday Party":

After it had been determined to make a descent on Murfreesboro, Forrest had his brigade drawn up and made a stirring appeal to the officers and men to sustain him in the effort he was about to make. He told them that the next day (July 13) would be the anniversary of his birth, and that he would like to celebrate it at Murfreesboro, near his birthplace, in a becoming manner. All of the command promised that they would contribute what they could to the felicitation of the occasion.<sup>7</sup>

About midnight the command reached Woodbury, where the whole population of the town seemed to be on the streets. It is said that the ladies gathered around Forrest, and tearfully and vehemently related the events of the evening before when a large detachment of Federal soldiers swooped down on the town and took or carried away almost every man in town, young and old, and rushed them off to prison in

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<sup>7</sup>B. L. Ridley, Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing & Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 106-07.

Murfreesboro. The women appealed to the commander to rescue their brothers, fathers, and husbands. It is said that Forrest informed them in his most gracious tones that he would oblige them.

After a few hours rest, Forrest and his company moved on to Murfreesboro. Reaching the outskirts of the city a few hours before dawn, he sent forward a small detachment and captured the pickets. The way now being open, he planned the attack. It was desired to attack the enemy at all points simultaneously. The Federals were divided into encampments at different points. One encampment was sleeping peacefully on the lawn of the old Maney home in the north-eastern part of town, another about one mile to the west of the city on the banks of Stone's River, and still another in the courthouse yard. The first encampment was taken after a brief skirmish, but the attack on the courthouse did not go so well. At the outset the Confederate cavalry was virtually in the midst of the camp before the Federals knew it. The Confederates tore over the tent ropes and unleashed a devastating fire onto the surprised men. A number of the Yankees sought refuge in the courthouse, where a small detachment was already its occupants, and barricaded the doors. The windows served excellently for sniping. Soon Forrest came on the scene and ordered his men to secure axes and storm the doors. The doors collapsed under the



pressure of Forrest's men, but the Federals who had taken refuge on the second floor, which was occupied also by a hundred or more prisoners, refused to surrender. Forrest ordered a fire built inside the lower hallway, and after a short time the enemy almost suffocated from the smoke came down the stairway. Behind the Federals streamed the prisoners shouting in joy for their release. By this time a huge crowd had gathered and there was shouting and merry-making. Many soldiers were reunited with their families. Some of the men who hurried out to freedom had been sentenced to hang the following morning.

The third encampment, the Third Minnesota, near Stone's River, was offering a spirited resistance. It was now past noon, and still the Federals were in their original position. Forrest turned his attention to this task. After making a rapid tour of the encampment, he ordered a charge by Major Smith and Major Harper. This charge was repulsed, and still a second attempt was made which likewise met with failure. It is said that Forrest, after these failures, placed himself at the head of his troops and made an appeal to them, saying that if they lost this skirmish it would be their first defeat. The charge was again ordered and the encampment penetrated, and the greater part of the Federals were either captured or wounded.

Following is an incident that admirers of Forrest contend has been grossly misrepresented. It was said that a negro captive was brought before Forrest, who cursed loudly and at the same time leveled his gun at the negro's head and blew out his brains. Ridley's version of the incident is parallel with the accounts of others of Forrest's admirers.

While passing through the encampment he was fired at several times by a negro, who suddenly emerged from one of the tents. Forrest returned the fire and killed him, and did exactly what he ought to have done. This came under the personal observation of the writer.<sup>8</sup>

After a short skirmish the Federals were brought under submission. Forrest forwarded an ultimatum to the Maney homestead to Major Duffield, the commander, who was at the time seriously wounded. The dispatch ordered a complete surrender within thirty minutes or else the Federals would suffer the consequences. The tone of the ultimatum impressed Duffield, and after a conference with his staff during the allotted time, he acquiesced to Forrest's terms. The results of the battle as given by B. L. Ridley were:

The results of this affair were some 1,765 prisoners including Brigadier-General Crittenden, commanding the post, 600 head of horses and mules, forty or fifty wagons, five or six ambulances, four pieces of artillery and 1,200 stand of arms.

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<sup>8</sup>Ridley, p. 110.

A Federal writer from Murfreesboro estimated their loss in property and munition at \$1,000,000.<sup>9</sup>

After the destruction of a few railroad cars containing supplies and tearing up sections of the railroad, Forrest put his troops, prisoners, and captured supplies into motion toward McMinnville.

Miss Lillian Jetton, who now lives with her sister and brother in the old Maney home, relates this story as told her by her mother, a young girl at the time of Forrest's descent on Murfreesboro:

Mother was a young girl at her father's home in Readyville, the first brick house in Rutherford County, which had been built by her grandfather, Colonel Charles Ready, when word came that General Forrest's brigade was coming. Forrest had stopped in Woodbury that day, July 12, and had pledged to the Confederate women that he was going to celebrate his birthday by capturing Murfreesboro and freeing the confederates held prisoners there.

That day, my mother summoned her loyal slaves, Aunt Minnie, Uncle Martin, and Malindy, and they prepared bread and meat for the Forrest cavalrymen. That evening she stood on the horse block at the gate of her home as General Forrest and his men came riding along. She noticed that their horses' hoofs were wrapped to muffle them and that the men did not speak or cheer, moving silently through the summer night in order to accomplish more effectually the maneuver which their commander had planned for them.

The old Maney home, now called Oak Manor, is rich in Civil War lore. As has been stated before, the lawn of the old home was used as a Federal encampment prefatory to

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<sup>9</sup>Ridley, p. 110.

Forrest's raid on Murfreesboro. The house itself was the headquarters for a staff of Federal officers. One of the officers occupying this house was ill and in bed. Probably the most intimate account of the camp on the lawn of the old estate was given by Private Charles W. Bennett of Company G of the Ninth Michigan Infantry. This is in diary form and excerpts from it are preserved by the Captain William Lytle Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. The graphic account of Forrest's capture of the Federals at Oak Manor follows:

I arose at a quarter past four, Sunday, July 13, and while in the rear of the camp on the east side, I heard two guns in the direction of our pickets on the Woodbury Road, the road east toward Chattanooga.

As reveille was not until five o'clock and all were sleeping quietly except a few cooks who were chopping wood for their breakfast fires, I returned to our cook's fire and while washing, each time I stooped down, I could hear an unusual roar like a distant windstorm, but as I raised to listen I concluded it was the echoes of the chopping. But to satisfy myself I at last put my ear to the ground and then distinctly heard the clatter and roar of cavalry on the gallop.

I ran to each tent in our company yelling, "Turn out, the Rebels are coming." By the time I reached the second tent our company bugler, William White, began to blow the alarm (poor fellow he was killed in his tent, shot through the head before he got dressed) and that aroused a drummer who beat the long roll. By this time the Rebels had reached the brigade teamsters, camped about eighty rods on our left towards town, and then came to the cavalry which was beyond where the Third Minnesota Regiment and Hewlett's Battery had camped on our left. The cavalry hardly had time to get out of their tents, let alone arming and mounting their horses. There was a great deal of yelling and scattered fire in

those camps and the ropes stretched from tree to tree for hitching the horses tumbled many a Rebel horse and rider, but these delayed the Rebels only a few minutes.

Captain Mansfield was sick in bed in Major Maney's house. First Lieutenant Hull was acting adjutant, and Second Lieutenant Sellon was officer of the guard, leaving my company, G, without an officer.

I got the company all in line, divided off into sections and platoons, and started to form on the color line in front of the camp but the adjutant called me to come to the left with Company C which was the only other company then organized, Company C being tented next to our left and had been aroused by my calling out Company G.

When Colonel Parkhurst rushed out of his tent he commanded to form square on the left previously occupied by the four companies gone to Tullahoma. But there being no rules to form squares only when in line or column, each company rushed to that space and while in that dilemma of trying to form a square, the Rebels came in sight, yelling like Indians, their horses on a gallop. We were all in a huddle. The Rebels began firing, being armed largely with shot guns loaded with big shot, which came like hail.

Colonel Parkhurst ordered, "Fall back over the fence," meaning the picket fence on the right of the camp and about eight rods away. The order was obeyed by many, but others fell back part way but did not go over the fence, some getting behind trees.

About one o'clock in the afternoon Forrest drew up all his forces in sight on our left (towards town) and front and then sent in a flag of truce demanding a surrender with his usual threat that no quarter would be given if we refused. The adjutant counted only one hundred and twenty-five men with guns able for duty. Out of about two hundred and twenty-five men of the five companies in camp for duty at four o'clock in the morning, thirteen had been killed and seventy-eight had been wounded. We had lost ninety-one from these five companies.

The Rebels rode up to us in good order which they did not do in the morning, led by General Forrest, who assured Colonel Parkhurst that our private property would be respected.

Captain Mansfield, though wounded, had come from his sick bed in the Maney house and remained

with his men until the fighting stopped. Wounded and sick in the hospitals were paroled officers in this category agreeing to report to Confederate headquarters in Chattanooga as soon as they were well enough. The rest of the Federal prisoners were started on the road to Chattanooga that afternoon.

We passed through Woodbury late in the evening and went into bivouac in a field about midnight, the ground being our only bed with only the sky for a covering. A large number of officers and men were allowed to ride horses and mules which our cavalry had captured a few days before.

## CHAPTER II

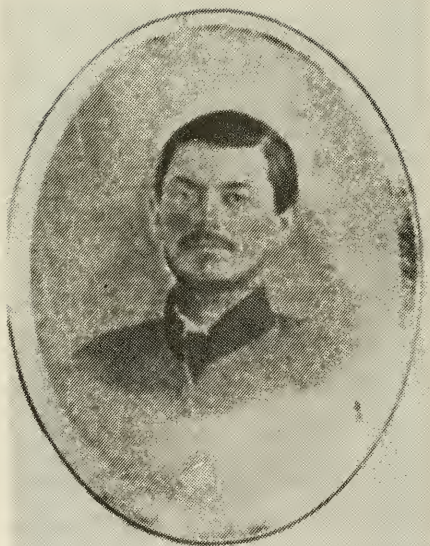
### DEWITT SMITH JOBE

Dewitt Smith Jobe's life parallels that of many others during the War Between the States of 1861-65. During this period when passions were high and "glorious death" was accepted with a flourish, many young men went to their graves with an enemy curse. Scouting in and behind the enemy line was precarious work and if the soldier was unlucky enough to be captured, the natural procedure was to exact, if possible, any information that he might be carrying. If the captors were unsuccessful, the soldier was executed, usually in a macabre manner. Jobe shared his fate with fellow countians including John Bowman, Dee Smith, R. M. Dillard, and Sam Davis, the latter the best known of the group.

### The Jobe Family

Little is known of the early life of Dewitt Smith Jobe. His father was Elihu C. Jobe, who was undoubtedly one of the enterprising farmers of Rutherford County. Elihu Jobe was born in Maury County, Tennessee, August 7, 1809, the son of James and Catherine (Pitt) Jobe, natives respectively of Virginia and North Carolina. His father





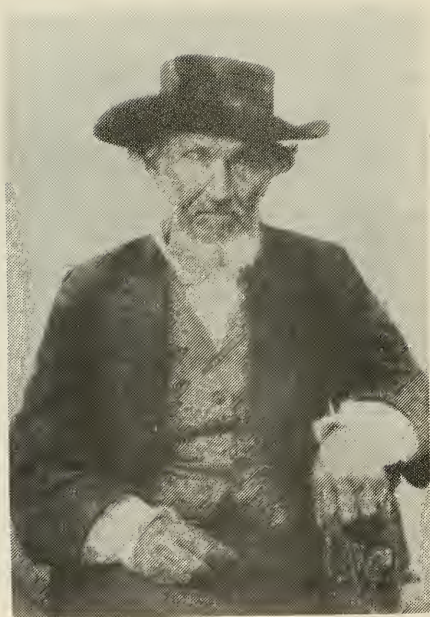
DEWITT SMITH JOBE



came to Maury County at an early date and settled on a farm. He was one of the constructors of the first cotton gin in that county. He died in 1833. Elihu was a farmer boy and received a good common-school education. At an early age he served an apprenticeship in a cabinet shop. After finishing his trade he started in business for himself in Rutherford County. He purchased the farm on which he operated a cabinet shop besides cultivating the fields. There are a number of old homes in Rutherford County today that contain furniture made at the Jobe shop. Also, a number of people in the Mechanicsville district were buried in the coffins fashioned by the hand of Jobe. In 1833 he married Mary W. Smith and to this union were born seven children, namely: Luke E., Benjamin A., Nancy Price (wife of T. H. Hollowell), Martha A. (wife of J. T. Beasley), Elizabeth Katherine, Lavina S. (wife of W. F. Edwards), and Dewitt S. Jobe.

A letter dated October 28, 1938, from one of the grandchildren, gives some information concerning the family. An excerpt follows:

Elihu C. Job, father of Dee Jobe, was a farmer and slave owner. He was also a cabinet maker and held some office in Rutherford County or precinct; I think we would now call it Justice of the Peace. He had an office near the old home where he did his work as cabinet maker and also attended to duties of this office. He, too, looked after a number of war widows during the war.



SQUIRE ELIHU C. JOBE

The mother of the family died, I think, about the time the war closed, grieving terrible over the loss of her son. The family attended, and were members of, the Methodist church.

Luke Jobe was the oldest child of the family and taught school near the old home. Later he was a farmer in West Tennessee, and was never very strong physically. He has a daughter, Mrs. Wesley Cannon of Buchanan, Tennessee, who could probably give you details of her father's life.

Kate Jobe was the second child and before the war she directed the slaves in spinning and weaving cloth for their garments. She directed the slaves also in making those garments, and after her mother died, Kate mothered the family. She helped her father line the coffins which he dressed by hand. She never married, living at the old home and taking care of her father who was paralyzed and lay in bed four years before he died, I think, at the age of seventy-six.

Ben Jobe, Horace's father, was the third child of the family and also a spy during the war. I think Dee was just younger than Ben. Then came Price who later became Mrs. Tom Hollowell, Sr., of Murfreesboro. She has three daughters in Cincinnati, Ohio. The oldest one, Mrs. William Jennings (Mary Hollowell) could probably give you more information about the Jobe family, having lived in Murfreesboro longer than any other niece or nephew of Dee Jobe.

Martha Ann (my mother) was a very jolly woman, though a good Christian, musical, and very hospitable. They always had guests and especially young people pulling candy, dancing, singing, and having a jolly good time. She said when the Union soldiers were camped not many miles from there, several of them would ride over every evening, and they would have a lot of fun, for there were always other girls there who were lonely in their homes.

The youngest child of the family was Lavenia, who married a Mr. Edwards. She died with pneumonia when quite a young woman, leaving two sons who used to own a dairy at Nashville. I think they still do, though I am not sure.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Mrs. J. T. McCarty, October 28, 1938.



KATE JOBE



PRICE JOBE

An excerpt from another letter, dated October 21, 1938, gives further information as to the family. This, also, was written by one of the grandchildren of Elihu C. Jobe.

I know that the Jobe family has been entirely removed from Rutherford County for twenty years or more, and no doubt many other old families of the Civil War times are either removed or have died out since.

I wrote you something about my mother, Mattie (Martha, originally) Ann Jobe, who became Mrs. J. T. Beasley and who always signed her name M. A. Beasley. Also I mentioned Uncle Ben Jobe, father of Horace A. Jobe of Paris, Tennessee. Besides two brothers, Ben and Dee Jobe, my mother had two sisters, Kate Jobe, spinster, who died at the home of my mother and father at Lancaster, this county, in 1901, and is buried with my father and mother in our family burial lot there. The other sister was Price Jobe who became Mrs. Tom Hollowell of Murfreesboro. I never saw our Aunt Price, but once visited, for an hour only, a daughter of hers, whose married name I do not remember, who lives in Cincinnati. Uncle Ben Jobe died about 1926 or 1927 at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Marie Jobe Pillow, in Galveston, Texas, and was buried, I believe, at Paris, Tennessee, the home of his son, Horace Jobe.<sup>2</sup>

Horace E. Jobe of Paris, Tennessee, in a letter concerning his father, Ben Jobe, says, "Ben Job enlisted in the Eighteenth Tennessee under Colonel Palmer, was taken prisoner at Fort Donelson, carried North, but escaped and served under Wheeler and Forrest the remainder of the war."

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<sup>2</sup>Letter from W. S. Beasley, October 21, 1938.





MARTHA ANN JOBE BEASLEY AND HUSBAND

### Dewitt S. Jobe's Military Career

Dewitt Smith Jobe was born June 4, 1840, at Mechanicsville in Rutherford County. He enlisted in 1861 at College Grove in Williamson County, ten miles from his home. The company that Jobe joined later became Company D of the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment. He served with this company until after the Battle of Murfreesboro. He was wounded and captured at the Battle of Fishing Creek and after his exchange participated in the Battle of Murfreesboro.

In the spring of 1863, while Bragg's army was at Shelbyville, General W. J. Hardee had Job detailed for service in which he did a great deal of dangerous work. He did this work for General Hardee until Bragg's army fell back into Georgia, when he was transferred to the Coleman Scouts. This was a very responsible position and necessitated working in behind the Federal lines.

In the summer of 1864, D. S. Jobe, Tom Joplin, and others came into Middle Tennessee and were scouting about in the area of College Grove, Triune, and Nolensville, in Williamson County. These villages were about seven miles apart and connected by the Nolensville Pike. The scouts, when in danger, would separate. On the night of August 29, 1864, Jobe rode all night and about sunrise the next morning he called at the home of Mr. William Moss, who had two sons in Company B, Twentieth Tennessee Regiment, and



got his breakfast. Mr. Moss lived about halfway between Nolensville and Triune, on the pike. His house was about two hundred yards west of the pike which ran between some very high hills.

After Jobe ate his breakfast he went about one mile west of Mr. Moss's house into a cornfield on the Sam Water's farm. Here he concealed himself and his horse. At this time a party of Yankees, fifteen in number, were scouting in the same neighborhood under the command of Sergeant Temple of the 115 Ohio Regiment, and to them Jobe's presence in the community was made known. They tracked his horse to the field, surrounded and captured him, and when Jobe saw that he would be captured or killed, having on his person some very valuable papers that would condemn himself and others (some thought that these papers were procured by a sweetheart of his in the neighborhood), he destroyed these papers by tearing and chewing them up. After they had captured him, they tied him and tried to make him tell the contents of the papers, but he would not. The Yankees told Jobe that they would kill him if he did not divulge the contents but still he refused. Then they tied a leather strap around his neck and began to choke him to death, but the brave boy in gray, who was alone, disarmed, and both hands tied, with fifteen of his armed enemies standing over him thirsting for his blood, would not

concede to their demands. Jobe, in this condition, chose not to betray his friends or to divulge his secret but preferred death. The captors beat him over the head with their guns, knocked out his upper front teeth, and dragged him by the leather strap that they had placed about his neck until he was strangled to death.

These fifteen men, who had the courage to murder one man who was tied and disarmed, went back to the pike and told some acquaintance of Jobe's what they had done and said he was the bravest man they had ever seen.

Word was sent to Jobe's home, six miles away, that he was killed and the old negro servant, Frank, who had nursed him when a child, volunteered to take the wagon and go for him. He was carried to his childhood home by the faithful old servant and buried in the family burial ground in the presence of his mother, father, and others. "No braver soldier, no greater patriot, no truer comrade gave up his life in this great struggle of ours for the right against the wrong, Sam Davis was not excepted."<sup>3</sup>

It is said that the bloody and cruel act prayed on Sergeant Temple's mind and eventually he went insane.

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<sup>3</sup>W. J. Murray, History of the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment, Volunteer Infantry, C. S. A. (Nashville: Publication Committee, 1904), p. 223.

This account from a letter, dated September 28, 1938, is a version given by Jobe's nephew:

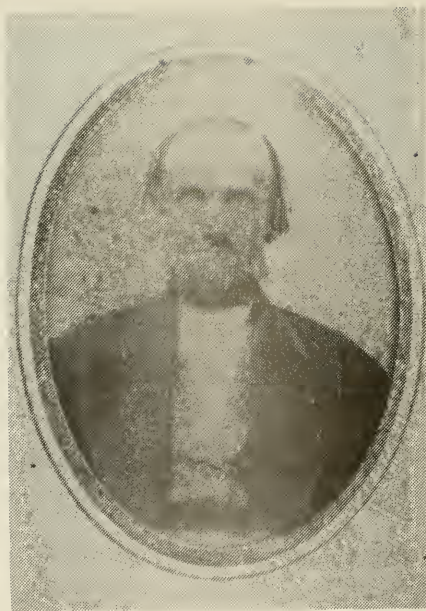
My father, Ben Jobe, always said that his brother Dee, of whom you inquire, was entitled to just as much credit for daring bravery as Sam Davis. I believe Captain B. L. Ridley mentioned this fact in his memoirs of the Confederate Soldiers of Rutherford County. My uncle, Dee Smith Jobe, was born in 1840, enlisted in the Twentieth Tennessee under Colonel Battle, was taken prisoner at Fishing Creek, Kentucky. In his first fight he was carried north and kept in prison several months but made his escape, and came back to his old command. I have always understood that Coleman's Scouts was a company of picked men from General Bragg's entire army. After making several trips inside the Federal lines gathering information, one morning after riding all night he stopped at a friend's home near Triune, Tennessee. They told him that the Federals were in the neighborhood and that it was not safe for him to be in the house but to hide in a nearby thicket and they would bring him his breakfast and feed for his horse, but a squad of Ohio Cavalry soon came and tracked his horse to the thicket and killed him. The captain of this bunch of murderers afterwards told my grandmother that they took a bridle rein, put it around his neck and strangled him to death because he would not divulge the information they sought. However, the captain said, "Madam, your son was the bravest man I ever saw."

I hope this information will be of some help to you, but I always get mad when I get strung out on the Confederates and damn Yankees.<sup>4</sup>

Without a doubt, Dewitt Jobe died a horrible death. All versions agree that he was inhumanly tortured before being put to death. Dyed-in-the-wool Southern soldiers were venomous in their denouncements of their northern enemies, the "damn Yankees," as they chose to call them, and they

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<sup>4</sup>Letter from Horace E. Jobe, September 28, 1938.



BEN JOBE

were never reluctant to give vent to their passion even when in danger. It is probable that Jobe further enraged his captors by heaping epithets upon them as they tried to force the information from him. In examining a number of old records and official reports, no mention could be found of the scout's death. It is the practice of commanding officers to make detail reports of engagements, movements, and captures, but there could not be found any report by Sergeant Temple or by anyone else. As the story has been proven beyond a doubt to be authentic, it is probable that the Sergeant, even considering that war is horrible and brings with it inhumanities that may be justifiable under this premise, was ashamed to make a report. Of course the Federal soldiers may have had their side and it have been a good one, but hearing the story now after over seventy-five years of countless transmittances, it sounds horribly and coldly executed.

A letter from Mrs. J. T. McCarty, a niece, gives the following information:

I do not know just how much my brother and cousin, Horace Jobe, have told you concerning Uncle Dee, but I do remember that the valuable information which he was carrying from Nashville to the Confederate Army of officers was very important, and it would be dangerous to the Confederates if the Northern army learned of it.

Dee was going through the woods horseback, I think, rather early in the morning and only a few miles from his father's home where he had expected, no doubt, to stop for a brief time for

food. As they always had food ready to serve if any soldiers stopped by the house, this was probably Jobe's destination.

Dee Jobe was surrounded by Union soldiers and forced to halt. They demanded the secret information which he had, and upon his refusal to divulge it, they first threatened him, then began to torture him, trying to force him to tell the secret which he was carrying. Finally they told him that if he would not tell what they wanted to know, they would cut out his tongue. He still refused and they did cut out his tongue but stopped after they had begun this, and gave him his last chance to save his life. He still refused to betray the trust, hence sacrificed his life for what he believed was his duty to his country.

This is the story told by my mother (his sister).

A young woman, a friend of the family, and her escort rode by and found his body. The woman recognized Uncle Dee and she got off her horse and spread a nice clean handkerchief over his face to keep off the sun.

After an hour or two there were two or three Northern soldiers who rode to his father's home and told him that they came to tell the family what a heroic son Dee was. They also told how they had treated Jobe and said they were sorry to bear such sad news, but thought it might lessen their grief to know how bravely he died.

Another letter from W. S. Beasley gives some description of Dewitt Jobe and a vivid account of his death.

I am sure my mother had a photograph of Uncle Dee, but we have been unable to locate it. I recall that he appeared to have been slender, of slightly more than medium height and youthful in age. He was dressed in a plain military uniform.

The story of Uncle Dee's death, as my mother recited it, has remained a vivid recollection of my youth and a life long inspiration to duty at any cost.

Since his capture and death occurred in another county and in a vicinity where he had only a few war-made friends through his operations

as a scout, accurate and complete details were hard to secure by his family. My mother's story of it was that Uncle Dee was scouting with one companion within the Yankee lines after they had captured Nashville. Uncle Dee, temporarily separated from his partner, was getting some sleep in a thicket in the daytime on the farm of a friend and sympathizer in Williamson County when he was surprised and captured by a band of Yankee guerrillas who found papers on his person which proved that he had operated within their lines and received information from friends within their lines.

In the effort to make him tell the source of his information they beat him brutally, hung him and then let him down for two or three times, and finally shot him and left his body hanging from a tree. They secured his papers, but no information as to how he got the papers.

It was always understood that the enemy information that he had was secured through a young woman in or near Nashville who passed freely behind the Yankee lines and who was smart enough to do this dangerous service. Dee S. Jobe nor any other chivalrous soldier could have done anything else but die gladly in the defense of such a friend.

B. L. Ridley, Lieutenant General of A. P. Stewart's staff, Confederate States of America, gives the story of Jobe's action prior to his death and his subsequent fate:

Those to whom I refer were private soldiers. Dee S. Jobe was a scout, and of the famous men commanded by "Coleman." Jobe lived near Mechanicsville, Rutherford County, Tennessee. He was only a boy of twenty years. Detailed from the Twentieth Tennessee and ordered into the lines of the Federals from Bragg's army, he had fallen asleep in a thicket and some one telling of his hiding place, he fell into the hands of the enemy. They dubbed him "bushwhacker," but offered to spare his life if he would tell of his comrades and of their proposed meeting place. Jobe declined and they tortured him to death by putting out his eyes and pulling out his tongue. The leader who had him killed became a raving maniac in contemplating his bloody deed. He said that Jobe was the bravest man he ever saw.



Some of his comrades of the Coleman Scouts who survived the war, after a fitting preamble, resolved, "That while we regret, with the sorrow of our inmost souls, D. S. Jobe's cruel fate, we can but recollect with pride how nobly he died--strangled, beaten, and abused; yet he defied his persecutors to the end."

"Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,  
For now he lives in fame, though not in life."

The signatures to that paper are given to show their membership: H. B. Shaw, Captain, William Roberts, George D. Hughes, John C. Davis, James T. Patterson, W. H. Portch, Sam Roberts, Alex Greig, J. T. Brown, A. H. Douglas, T. M. Joplin, L. A. Owen, N. J. Vaughn, W. J. Moore, Richard Anderson, J. M. Shute.<sup>5</sup>

C. C. Henderson in his Story of Murfreesboro gives somewhat the same account:

D. S. Jobe, a young man of limited social advantages and education, living at Mechanicsville (Big Spring), this county, volunteered his services to the Confederate cause. Jobe enlisted in a company that was raised in his neighborhood, which was later made a part of the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment.

Although only twenty years of age his fitness for special service as a member of the famous Coleman Scouts was recognized by his superiors and he became attached to the command of Coleman, the same organization to which Sam Davis belonged. On one occasion he was detailed to attempt to penetrate the Federal lines to secure certain information, thought to be of much importance to General Bragg. He fell asleep at night in a thicket and was discovered by some unknown party who reported him to the Federals. He was captured and although he assured his captors that he was a member of the

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<sup>5</sup> B. L. Ridley, Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing & Publishing Co., 1906), p. 503.



regular army he was convicted of being a "bushwhacker" and was sentenced to be shot.

The officer in command of the Federals offered to spare his life if he would inform him of the whereabouts of Coleman's famous scouts and their future plans. He refused. His captors then proceeded to torture him in the hope of exhorting a statement from him but with no success. He was cruelly put to death.<sup>6</sup>

A nephew, son of Lavenia Jobe (Mrs. Edwards), gives the following information concerning his Uncle Dewitt's death and the family burying ground located about one-half mile from the house on a knoll overlooking the old Jobe home:

I have been told that Dee Jobe was murdered in a corn field near Triune, Tennessee, where he was captured by some Yankees. He had some papers which he destroyed by chewing to such a state that they could not be placed together so as to be read. After having been murdered, Jobe was left lying in the field and the Yankees went to his father's house and told the father about it and where the body could be found. His father sent one of the negroes by the name of Frank Jobe to bring the body to where it was buried on the hill you visited. There are four graves at the north end of the graveyard without markers except some sandstone which was made by the negro that brought Dee Jobe home for the burial. The graves are those of Dee, his father and mother, and my mother, Lavenia Jobe Edwards, but I am sorry I do not know which one is which.<sup>7</sup>

Miss Jeanette King of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, whose father was a soldier in the war, gives the account as it was told to her while she was a young woman:

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<sup>6</sup>C. C. Henderson, The Story of Murfreesboro (Murfreesboro: News-Banner Publishing Co., 1929), pp. 81-82.

<sup>7</sup>Letter from Hugh O. Edwards, November 10, 1938.

After Dee Jobe had refused repeatedly to divulge the contents of the papers and the name of the person giving them to him, the Yankees proceeded to torture him. They beat out his teeth with the butt of a pistol, punched out his eyes with a bayonet, and finally after Jobe showered them with epithets, they cut out his tongue. Not satisfied with this they choked him to death with a rope. His body was thrown into a deep sink hole. Luckily, Jobe's clothing caught on the side of the hole, and his family was able to find his body.

Most of the versions differ as to the manner of Jobe's death. This can be explained by the number of years transpiring between the actual deed and the relating of the present versions which have probably been changed to some extent or embellished with a hatred of the murderers. From printed and oral sources it seems that he was either hanged or strangled to death by a bridle rein or leather strap, or hanged and then shot, or merely tortured to death. There is a difference of opinion as to whether he was captured during the day or at night, and whether he was asleep at the time or not, and what disposition was made of his body. The few people who are familiar with the deed contend that his bravery and patriotism were as great as that of Sam Davis, the Confederate boy hero.

#### Mechanicsville

Mechanicsville is thirteen and one-half miles from Murfreesboro, in close proximity to Almaville and Rocky Fork in Rutherford County, Tennessee. It gained this

sobriquet by virtue of the type of work carried on at the Elihu Jobe home.

When Elihu Jobe came to Rutherford County around 1840 and settled in the community soon to be known as Mechanicsville, he set up a cabinet shop. Among the products that he made were plow points, wagon and buggy accessories, furniture, and coffins. His children, both boys and girls, helped in the shop. Price Jobe (Mrs. T. H. Hollowell) and Kate Jobe were very adept in the work. Kate Jobe was very skillful in lining and finishing coffins.

In the years before the Civil War, Elihu Jobe built a number of additions to the shop but his work was disrupted by the war. His sons enlisted and the mother and girls were engaged in sewing and making clothing for the soldiers.

The community of Mechanicsville was progressive enough to have a post office, but it was discontinued after the war. The settlement is never spoken of as Mechanicsville anymore except by older people who remember something of its history. It is now known as Big Springs.

#### The Jobe House

The Jobe house was built in 1833. It is a large two-story log house of six rooms. A long porch extends the length of the front of the house. For about twenty-five years the house has been occupied by various tenant farmers



WHERE DEWITT JOBE WAS BORN



WHERE DEWITT JOBE WAS BURIED

and their families. One enterprising itinerant built a small kitchen on the west end in 1918. Also in the span of time the building has been weatherboarded and the roof covered with tin. In places the unpainted boarding has fallen off and the huge logs with much of the chinking still intact can be seen. A large brick chimney has been built on the side of the house opposite the large original stone chimney which is still standing. In one corner of the front lawn is a small building of large logs with the chinking gone and the roof fallen in. This is all that is left of Elihu Jobe's cabinet shop, and it is now used as a chicken house.

The road to Rocky Fork now passes the rear of the house since the thoroughfare has been rerouted. The premises bear no marker by an organization and are in great need of repair.

#### The Old Hearse Road

The old hearse road is now a path and hardly perceptible in some places. It begins at the front of the Jobe home and winds around a small hill through a level glade and ends at a rail fence. Beyond this at a distance of approximately fifty yards is the family burying ground.

### The Family Burying Ground

About one-half mile from the house on a little knoll is the burying ground. It is connected with the lowland by a winding hearse road, now practically indistinguishable in the underbrush and weeds.

There is no available record of a Jobe interment here before 1864 when Dee Jobe was buried after his death at Triune. There are evidences though of a number of bodies having been interred here because of twenty-five or thirty sandstone slabs still visible. The four graves of the immediate family of Elihu Jobe are at the north end of the grounds. The four members of the family buried here are: Dewitt Jobe, 1864; Dewitt's mother, 1865; Lavenia (Mrs. Edwards), 1875; and Dewitt's father, 1885. There are no inscriptions on any of the slabs and there is no record as to their identity.

Today it is difficult to find the graves. Trees and bushes have pushed their way through the graves and most of the slabs have fallen down. The grounds are in an isolated spot, and no one has been buried there for more than fifty years.

Old settlers of the community say that the graveyard was once inclosed within a fine looking fence made of dressed cedar posts and connected by two lines of chain.

When the burying ground was deserted, the cedar posts gradually disappeared and were used probably for firewood by surrounding farm owners.



## CHAPTER III

### OTHER PATRIOTS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY

Rutherford County was productive of patriots and martyrs for the Southern cause as is evidenced by the foregoing chapter on Dewitt Jobe and the present one on three of his fellow scouts, Dee Smith, John Bowman, and Sam Davis.

#### Dee Smith

Dee Smith was a cousin of Dewitt Jobe. Between the two there existed a close friendship. When Smith learned of the bloody deed at Triune perpetrated against his intimate cousin and friend, Dewitt Jobe, he became enraged. B. L. Ridley, in his Journal, tells the story as follows:

There is a sequel to Jobe's tragic end that in sentiment and devotion is as beautiful as that of Damon and Pythias or of Jonathan and David. Jobe had a kinsman and a brother scout, Dee Smith, a neighbor and friend. When he was told of Jobe's torture and persecution he grew desperate and his mind became unhinged. He left the Forty-fifth Tennessee Regiment near Chattanooga, raised the black flag and declared that henceforth he would never take a prisoner. It is asserted that he slew not less than fifty of his enemies. At last they surrounded him near Nolensville, Tennessee, and shot him. Afterwards they brought him twenty miles from Nolensville to Murfreesboro. Although in excruciating pain when the doctors probed his wounds, he said that he would die before his enemies should see him flinch. Fortunately, he died before noon of the next day, at which time he was to be hanged.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>B. L. Ridley, Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing & Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 503-04.



Mr. Sam Mitchell, ninety-seven, one of the two remaining Confederate veterans in Rutherford County, Tennessee, tells this story of Dee Smith:

When Dee Smith learned of his cousin's death, he swore an oath that he would never take another Yankee prisoner. Sometime during the night he slipped away from his regiment at Chattanooga, which was the Forty-fifth Tennessee, and headed toward Rutherford County. A number of miles from his army he secured a horse at a farmhouse and spurred on until he came to Tullahoma. On the outskirts of this town he discovered the sleeping camp of a small company of Yankee cavalry. He dismounted outside the picket lines and managed to slip into the camp. He crawled around in the darkness until he found the mess tent. He rummaged around until he discovered a large butcher knife, and arming himself with this formidable weapon he crawled out into the darkness outside the glare of the campfires. In a few minutes he threaded himself back among the rows of tents, each containing eight men. Here he went about the methodical work of slitting the throat of each sleeping man. Finished with this tent he sought out another. Here he was in the act of finishing off the fifteenth man when the single live soldier stirred in his sleep and sat up. This sent Smith into a panic. He sprang up and hurried out of the tent. In searching for his horse, he aroused the pickets who, discovering that the stranger did not intend to halt, began firing. He found his horse and scrambling on its back rode madly out the road to Murfreesboro. The Yankee pursuers said afterwards that Smith still carried a big bloody butcher knife in his hand as he rode, waving it menacingly in their direction. Somewhere past Manchester Smith eluded his enemies and before many hours was in Rutherford County.

While Smith was in Rutherford County he hid out in the woods close to his home and close to the spot where his friend, Jobe, was killed. Smith's neighbors and friends gave him food for some time and a bed for the night. Smith

was constantly in danger of being apprehended by roving bands of Yankees. He followed out his resolve to kill every Yankee he met, and although fifty may have been a slight exaggeration, without a doubt, Smith did murder a great number. These two stories by Miss Jeanette King, as told to her by her father, reveal something of Smith's state of mind and his desire for revenge. The first concerns Smith and two Yankees.

On the road between the Charles King home and the Franklin Road bridge, Dee Smith surprised two Yankee horsemen and forced them to dismount. Smith carried two braces of pistols but no ammunition, so he marched his captives down the road to the home of an acquaintance. He ordered them to hold his horse while he secured a meal. The two men had evidently learned by this time that their captor was the half-insane Dee Smith, so they acquiesced obediently.

While Smith's friend, whose husband was away in the army, prepared the meal, he preceeded to mold bullets and load his pistols. At a little distance from the house the two men stood by the horse, glancing apprehensively in Smith's direction. After eating, Smith tested his pistols and joined the two men again. He directed them back in the direction which they had previously traveled. After going about one-half mile he ordered them to halt with their eyes to the front. On the side of the road was a shallow sink hole that had been partly filled with soil from the rains. Smith drew two of his pistols, took careful aim at the back of the Yankees' heads, and fired. They crumpled to the ground. He quickly scribbled two notes, and after placing the murdered men on their backs and in the bottom of the hole, he secured the two notes on the uniform of each. The paper bore this legend:

"Part of the debt for my murdered friend,  
Dee Jobe."

This is Miss King's story of Dee Smith and Mr. Puckett as related to her by her father, Charles King:

Mr. Puckett was a Union sympathizer living on the Franklin Road. He had sworn allegiance to the Union a few months before and carried the papers on his person. Smith in his most maniacal stage since deserting the army met Puckett one day and demanded to see his papers. Puckett produced them with misgiving.

Smith then placed the barrel of his big horse pistol against the temple of the sympathizer, and demanded that he eat the papers. Puckett, knowing Smith's state of mind, complied and after choking the last fragment down his throat, asked,

"Dee, why did you make me do that?"

"Because you wouldn't let me run rabbits in your pasture when I was a boy," Smith answered.

Smith developed a deep hatred for Union sympathizers.

A number of Rutherford countians had taken the Oath of Allegiance to the United States, some by desire and some by force. This is the oath as taken by Mr. Puckett and others:

I, . . ., solemnly swear, without any mental reservation or evasion, that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the laws made in pursuance thereof; and that I will not take up arms against the United States, or give aid or comfort, or furnish information, directly or indirectly, to any person or persons belonging to any of the so-styled Confederate States who are now or may be in rebellion against the United States. So help me God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>W. G. Stevenson, Thirteen Months in the Rebel Army (London: Sampson, Low, Son & Co., 1862), p. 223.

Mr. Tom Batey, who was a close friend to the Smith family, tells two stories that are in keeping with Dee Smith's temperament. The first is significant of the legendary fear in which the deranged Confederate deserter was held.

Dee Smith, while still a deserter from his ranks and an avenged killer, stopped at Mr. Snell's store on the Franklin Road to purchase some tobacco. The storekeeper and a number of stragglers noticed that he carried six pistols strapped around his body besides a large musket in a sling across his shoulder. After making his purchase he mounted and rode away. Hardly had he vanished when a small unit of Yankee cavalymen rode down the road and pulled up at the store. They inquired of Smith's whereabouts and being told that he had been there a moment ago, asked,

"Was he armed?"

The storekeeper answered that he carried six pistols and a musket. The soldiers went into an impromptu council of war and after a few moments of deliberation turned their horses and headed back toward Murfreesboro in a gallop.

Mr. Batey's second story is one of many concerning Smith's long list of victims.

One day while Rosecrans was occupying Murfreesboro and adjoining territory and making sporadic forays in search of Dee Smith, the hunted man himself was crossing the ford on Stone's River near where Franklin Road bridge now crosses the stream. When Smith reached the middle of the river, he was accosted by another horseman fording from the opposite side. Smith discovered that the man was a negro dressed in the brevets of a corporal. The negro rode abreast of Smith and demanded that he halt. Smith carried a small cap and ball derringer with a single load and quickly producing the gun fired at his would-be captor. The ball entered the negro's throat below the chin

and tore out through his temple. He slumped off the horse and sank from view in the water. Smith shouted, "By God, you saved Rosecran's life." Smith had been carrying the single-barreled firearm for some time in hopes of assassinating the Yankee General, Rosecrans.

When Smith was finally captured at Nolensville, in Williamson County, Tennessee, and brought to Murfreesboro for execution, he was mortally wounded. It is said that during the night preceding his execution some friends came to visit him and gave him a drug that would hasten his death, so that he would not die at the hands of the Yankees the following day. Smith did succumb before the appointed hour.

#### John Bowman

John Bowman, a member of Colonel Paul Anderson's cavalry, was cut off in Hood's retreat and took shelter near Murfreesboro, his home. The Federals caught him near Drennon, a town midway between Murfreesboro and Lebanon, tied him to a tree, and threatened to kill him. Instead of begging for his life, Bowman defied his captors and heaped epithets upon them until they, in frenzied rage, riddled him with bullets. The following is one of Bowman's exploits as a soldier as given in B. L. Ridley's Journal:

I had an experience with Bowman in 1866 that showed his recklessness and want of fear. While Hood was environing Nashville and Forrest was dashing upon Murfreesboro, seventy-five "Yanks" had been in a block-house near Smyrna depot, guarding the railroad between Nashville and Murfreesboro. Things were getting so "squally" that they left their fortress at Murfreesboro. Four Rebs had skipped through from Hood's army to see homefolks, John Bowman among them. They looked up the pike and saw it black with blue coats. The idea was that naturally they were so badly frightened a shot or two would stampede them, and that we would get at least their wagons and teams. Knowing every pig path, the four Rebs rushed through the cedars and ensconced themselves in a thicket on Searcy's farm alongside the old road. As the seventy-five marched along, each Reb on his horse drew his Navy and fired. Did they run; Well, never in the wide world. I can hear that Yankee officer now cry, "Halt! Right wheel! Fire!"

They peeled the saplings, made shot holes through our clothes and saddles; it looked like demons had turned loose upon us, and it seemed that they would kill me in spite of fate. We got over the hill after a time; they did not pursue us nor did we pursue them. Bowman wanted to go back and attack again, but the rest of us demurred. We dubbed that battle, "Hardup," for if ever there was a hard time getting out of a thicket, that was one. Capture "Yanks?" No, we were glad enough to save our scalps. It was John Bowman's recklessness that induced four of us to attack seventy-five! One of the young men, only fourteen at that time (Dr. G. W. Crosthwait, of Florence, Tennessee, and who received only this baptism of fire during the great war), often now speaks of the battle of "Hardup" as one which ought to be recorded.<sup>3</sup>

Sam Davis

The best known of Rutherford County patriots is Sam Davis. His patriotic sacrifice during the Civil War has

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<sup>3</sup>Ridley, pp. 506-08.

since stirred many writers to pen eulogic words in praise of his act. Accounts of the incident have been incorporated into various book supplements. Robert H. White's Tennessee, Its Growth and Progress, a state adopted textbook published in 1936, carries an account of the deed.

The life and story of the execution at Pulaski, Giles County, Tennessee, November 27, 1863, is well known. Davis was born October 6, 1842, near Smyrna, Rutherford County, Tennessee. He spent his early boyhood working on his father's farm. At the outbreak of the war, Davis was a student at the Western Military Institute (now Montgomery Bell Academy), at Nashville, Tennessee. His instructors were Bushrod R. Johnson and Edmond Kirby Smith, later to distinguish themselves as officers in the Confederate Army. Davis enlisted in the First Regiment of Infantry. His work proved so good that when Bragg organized a company of scouts in 1863 Davis was recommended as a member. This company, distinguished as "Coleman's Scouts" from a nonemclature of Captain H. B. Shaw, came under the personal direction of General B. F. Cheatham.

These scouts, especially active in Middle Tennessee, worked in and around the Federal lines securing information from friends and by observation of the general status of the enemy. It was sometimes necessary for them to sleep



in thickets and caves and secure food from loyal friends in the territory that they traversed.

The latter part of 1863 General G. M. Dodge, with a large command, was stationed at Pulaski in Giles County, Tennessee. This was an expediency by the Federal authorities to keep open to the Confederacy the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. General Bragg became anxious to ascertain the movements of his enemy, therefore he dispatched Captain Shaw and some of his scouts to this vicinity. It is said that Shaw entered the occupied town of Pulaski in the guise of an herb doctor and was able to secure first-hand information as to numbers, supplies, etc. It is said that Dodge had recently received a very important dispatch from headquarters that contained very vital statistics relative to his position and orders for further occupation. How Shaw managed to secure the valuable information has never been told. It has been said that a negro servant employed about the camp found the papers on the general's desk and carried them away to Shaw. There is another version of the incident which involved a young woman. This young woman inveigled a soldier about the camp into bringing the papers to her. Since she was a friend to the chief of the scouts, it was an easy matter to convey the valuable information to him. At any rate, Shaw, by some ruse, secured the papers and with some other information,



including a letter to General Bragg, succeeded in getting the reports in the hands of Davis on November 19, 1863. It was Davis' task to carry these through the Federal lines to the Confederate encampment at Chattanooga. He secreted the dangerous papers in his shoes and saddle. It was a difficult undertaking as the countryside was thick with patrolling cavalrymen. He had traveled only a short distance when he circled a dense thicket of woods and came almost face to face with a small unit of cavalrymen. This unit proved to be a part of the "Kansas Jayhawkers" (Seventh Kansas Cavalry) which was scouring the country in search of scouts. Davis was searched and the papers found. One of the letters found in his boot was a communication to Colonel A. McKinstry, Provost Marshal-General, Army of the Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Giles County, Tennessee  
Thursday morning,  
Nov. 18, 1863

Colonel A. McKinstry  
Provost Marshal-General  
The Army of Tennessee,  
Chattanooga.

Dear Sir:--I send you seven Nashville and three Louisville papers and one Cincinnati, with dates to the 17th, in all eleven. I also send for General Bragg, three wash-balls of soap, three tooth brushes and two blank books. I could not get a larger size diary for him. I will send a pair of shoes and slippers, some more soap, gloves and socks soon.

The Yankees are still camped on the line of the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad. General Dodge's headquarters are at Pulaski; his main force is camped from that place to Lynville; some at Elk River, and two regiments at Athens. General Dodge has issued an order to the people in those counties to report all stock, grain and forage to him and he says he will pay or give vouchers for it. Upon refusal to report he will take it without pay. They are now taking all they can find. Dodge says he knows the people are all Southern and does not ask them to swear a lie. All the spare forces around Nashville and vicinity are being sent forward to McMinnville. Six batteries and twelve parrott guns were sent forward on the 14th, 15th, and 16th. It is understood that there is hot work in front somewhere. Telegrams suppressed.

Davis has returned; Gregg has gone below. Everything is beginning to work better. I send Roberts with things for you and General Bragg with dispatches. I do not think the Federals mean to stay; they are not repairing the main points on the road. I understand part of Sherman's forces have reached Shelbyville. I think a part of some other than Dodge's division came to Lynville from the direction of Fayetteville. I hope to be able to post you soon. I sent Billy Moore over in that country and am sorry to say he was captured. One of my men has just returned from there. The general impression of the citizens is that they will move forward some way. Their wagon trains have returned from Nashville. Davis tells me that the line is in order to Summerville. I send this by one of my men to that place. The dispatches sent you on November 9, with the papers of November 7, reached Decatur on November 10. Citizens were reading the papers the next morning after breakfast. I do not think the Mayor will do to forward them reports. I am with high regard,

E. Coleman,  
Captain Commanding Scouts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ridley, pp. 260-61.

Sam Davis was immediately arraigned before General Dodge, who, realizing that the information came from someone close to the headquarters, questioned him as to the source. Davis naturally refused to divulge the secret.

After Dodge's efforts to extricate the information proved futile, a commission was chosen for a court martial to try the captive. It is an extraordinary fact that Captain H. B. Shaw was captured at the same time as a person of suspicious character and was in the same cell with Davis. No evidence of recognition passed between the two men. Joshua Brown, who was also in the cell with Davis, gives an account as was related to him by Dodge some months later.

The next morning Davis was again taken to General Dodge's headquarters, and this is what took place between them which General Dodge told me occurred:

"I took him into my private office, and told him that it was a very serious charge brought against him; that he was a spy, and from what I found upon his person he had accurate information in regard to my army, and I must know where he obtained it. I told him that he was a young man, and did not seem to realize the danger he was in. Up to that time he had said nothing, but then he replied in the most respectful and dignified manner: 'General Dodge, I know the danger of my situation, and I am willing to take the consequences.' I asked him then to give me the name of the person from whom he got the information; that I knew it must be some one near my headquarters or who had the confidence of the officers of my staff, and repeated that I must know the source from which it came. I insisted that he should tell me, but he firmly declined to do so. I told him that I should have to

call a court-martial and have him tried for his life, and from the proofs we had, they would be compelled to condemn him; that there was no chance for him unless he gave the source of his information. He replied: 'I know that I will have to die, but I will not tell where I got the information, and there is no power on earth that can make me tell. You are doing your duty as a soldier, and I am doing mine. If I have to die, I do so feeling that I am doing my duty to God and my country.' I pleaded with and urged him with all the power I possessed to give him some chance to save his life, for I discovered that he was a most admirable young fellow, with the highest character and strictest integrity. He then said: 'It is useless to talk to me. I do not intend to do it. You can court-martial me, or do anything else you like, but I will not betray the trust reposed in me.' He thanked me for the interest I had taken in him, and I sent him back to prison. I immediately called a court-martial to try him."<sup>5</sup>

The action of the court-martial, November 26, 1863, was to sentence Davis to be hanged the following morning. It is said that Davis evidenced no fear when informed of his fate. He sat down that night and wrote a letter to his mother. It reveals a calmness that is remarkable for a man as young as Davis. The letter which follows was taken from the Confederate Veteran.

Pulaski, Giles County, Tenn.,  
November 26, 1863.

Dear Mother: O, how painful it is to write you! I have got to die to-morrow--to be hanged by the Federals. Mother, do not grieve for me. I do not fear to die. Give my love to all.

Your son, Samuel Davis.

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<sup>5</sup>S. A. Cunningham, "Sam Davis" (Confederate Veteran, VII, No. 12 (1899), 540.

Mother, tell the children all to be good. I wish I could see you all once more, but I never will any more. Mother and father, do not forget me. Think of me when I am dead, but do not grieve for me. It will not do any good. Father, you can send after my remains if you want to do so. They will be at Pulaski, Tennessee. I will leave some things, too, with the hotel keeper for you. Pulaski is in Giles County, Tennessee, south of Columbia.

S. D.<sup>6</sup>

Joshua Brown, a scout and an eyewitness to the execution, tells this story of succeeding events:

After his sentence, he was put into a cell in jail, and we did not see anything of him until on Thursday morning, the day before the execution. We were ordered to get ready to be removed from the jail to the courthouse in the public square. Davis was handcuffed and brought in just as we were eating breakfast. I gave him a piece of meat that I had been cooking, and he, being handcuffed, was compelled to eat it with both hands. He thanked me, and we all bade him good-by. The guard was doubled around the jail.

The next morning, Friday, November 27, at ten o'clock, we heard the drums, and a regiment of infantry marched down to the jail, and a wagon with a coffin in it was driven up, and the provost marshall went into the jail and brought Davis out. He got into the wagon, stood up, and looked around at the courthouse, and, seeing us at the windows, bowed to us his last farewell. He was dressed in a blue Federal coat, such as many of us had captured and then dyed brown.

Upon reaching the gallows Davis got out of the wagon and took his seat on a bench under the tree. He asked Captain Armstrong how long he had to live. He replied: "Fifteen minutes." He then asked him the news, and Armstrong told him of the battle of Missionary Ridge, and that our army had been defeated. He expressed much regret, adding:

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<sup>6</sup>Cunningham, p. 540.

"The boys will have to fight the battles without me." Armstrong said: "I regret very much having to do this. I feel that I would rather die myself than do what I have to do." Davis replied: "I do not think hard of you; you are doing your duty."

General Dodge still had hopes that Davis would recant when he saw that death was staring him in the face, and that he would reveal the name of the "traitor in his camp." He sent Captain Chickasaw, of his staff, to Davis. He rapidly approached the scaffold, jumped from his horse, and went directly to Davis, placed his hand on Davis' shoulder, and asked if it would not be better for him to speak the name of the one from whom he received the documents found upon him, adding: "It is not too late yet." And then, in his last extremity, Davis turned upon him and said: "If I had a thousand lives, I would lose them all here and now before I would betray my friends or the confidence of my informer."

Davis then turned to the provost marshal saying: "I am ready," ascended the scaffold, and stepped upon the trap.<sup>7</sup>

Mrs. Oscar H. Davis, Sr., sister-in-law of Sam Davis, issued privately a pamphlet concerning the brave act of her kinsman. She says that Davis wrote a short letter to his mother five minutes before he fell through the trap to his death.

Dear Mother: I have five minutes to live and will spend it in writing to you. I don't want you to grieve after me. I don't only feel I am doing my country's bidding, but that all Heaven is sanctioning the act I am about to take. I have asked the chaplain to sing "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand

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<sup>7</sup>Cunningham, p. 540.

and cast a wistful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie."

S. D.<sup>8</sup>

After his body was cut down and placed in the coffin, it was interred in a grave close to the scene of the execution.

Communication was hampered in the absence of regular mail service, and it was some days before the Davis family learned of the fate of their son. When the letters finally reached them, Sam's father sent John C. Kennedy and Oscar H. Davis, Sam's younger brother, to Pulaski to bring the body home for burial. They went into Pulaski and opened the grave, and after removing the top of the old box coffin, they lifted Sam's body out and placed it in the casket they had brought with them. On their return home they were forced to cross Duck River on a flat boat since all of the bridges were burned. There they found a number of army wagons belonging to the Yankees being moved over the same river. Mrs. Davis gives the following incident:

Some of the soldiers, seeing the wagon with its cargo, sent one of their number to investigate the identity and course of the two men. The soldier came up to the wagon and said, "Whose wagon is this?"

Kennedy answered, "This is young Davis you all hanged out here a few days ago. We are carrying him home for burial."

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<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Oscar M. Davis, Sr., Last Few Days of the Life of Sam Davis (Place of publication, Publisher, and date, unknown), p. 2.



The soldier went down to the flat boat and told the other men. They readily made room for the wagon to pass over, and Oscar Davis says that every hat was off in respect to the dead boy. Two soldiers walking beside the wagon were overheard talking. One said to the other, "We will have to suffer for this," meaning the execution of Sam Davis.<sup>9</sup>

Davis was buried in the graveyard at the rear of the home. A number of years ago the state purchased the site and improved the grounds. Today it is a historic spot visited by thousands of tourists each year. A fine memorial highway branches off from the Nashville Highway and passes by the house.

Mrs. Davis tells of an experience with Van Pelt, the soldier that pulled the death rope at Pulaski.

One Sunday morning, quite a long time ago, since I have been living at the old Davis home, the front door bell rang. Mr. Davis (my husband) went to answer the ring and met there a man who said, "Mr. Davis, my name is Van Pelt."

Mr. Davis said, "Come in, but I'll have to take you to the family room as there is no fire in the front of the house."

The man answered, "That is where I want to go." Mr. Davis could not understand why he said that, but they came in. When asked to have a seat, Mr. Van Pelt instead leaned his head upon his arm against the mantel piece. We couldn't think what the trouble could be until he turned around and said, "Mr. Davis, I'll have to explain. I'm the man who pulled the rope that broke Sam Davis's neck." He showed in every way a great grief. Later he told us that his business sent him to Nashville, and that he couldn't

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<sup>9</sup>Mrs. Oscar M. Davis, Sr., pp. 2-3.



return to Detroit without seeing where Sam Davis rested. He, upon being asked, remained to dinner and talked most courteously with the manner and appearance of a well-educated gentleman. He said that he had tried to pay out of the duty of executing Sam Davis, but the captain would not release him from the task.<sup>10</sup>

The spot where Davis is buried is about fifty yards to the rear of the house and is marked by a shaft of white marble about twelve feet high and resting on a granite pedestal. This marker was made possible by contributions from Confederate veterans and friends of Davis. The inscription on the marker reads:

In  
Memory of Samuel Davis  
A member of the 1st  
Tennessee Regiment of Volunteers  
Born October 6th, 1842  
Died November 27th, 1863  
Age  
21 years 1 month and 21 days  
He laid down his life for his country  
A truer soldier, a purer patriot, a  
braver man never lived who  
suffered death on the gibbet rather  
than betray his friends and country.<sup>11</sup>

There are other monuments that have been erected to Davis' memory. In Pulaski and its vicinity there are three monuments: one on the public square, one at the spot of execution, and another at the place where he is supposed to

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<sup>10</sup> Mrs. Oscar M. Davis, Sr., pp. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Copied from the marker at Sam Davis' grave, Smyrna, Tennessee.

have been captured by the Yankees. An excellent statue, made possible by contributions of friends, reposes on the Capitol grounds in Nashville. It is an established fact that no picture of Davis is extant. It is highly possible that none was ever made. When agitation arose for a statue in Nashville, the promoters were in quandary as to the features that the statue would carry. Miss Jeanette King and other United Daughters of the Confederacy of Murfreesboro say that when Zolnay, the famous sculptor, came down from New York to fashion the statue he demanded some copy to follow in his work. There was much discussion as to what disposition would be made of the matter, when it was recalled that one of Davis' sisters, Miss Andromedia Davis, bore a close resemblance to her brother. A portrait was painted of her and Zolnay used this as his model.

There have been a great number of poems written to Davis' memory. Five of these efforts, collected from various sources, have been included in this study. The following poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox was copied from the bronze tablet on the Sam Davis monument on the Capitol grounds at Nashville, Tennessee:

Sam Davis

When the Lord calls up earth's heroes,  
To stand before his face:  
O, many a name, unknown to fame

Shall ring from that high place;  
 Then out of a grave in the Southland  
 At the just God's call and beck,  
 Shall one man rise with fearless eyes  
 With a rope about his neck;  
 O Southland! Bring your laurels,  
 And add your wreath, O North!  
 Let glory claim the hero's name  
 And tell the world his worth.

On a visit to St. Paul, Minnesota, in May, 1906, B. L. Ridley related to A. S. Morton, a poet friend, the story of Sam Davis. It is said that the story affected the poet so much that Morton wrote and gave to B. L. Ridley a poem concerning the incident. Although the poem is written by a Northern man the feeling expressed in it is none the less worthy of the Southern hero.

#### Sam Davis Was Too Brave To Die

A fitful gleam of dying light,  
 The herald of a gloomy night  
 Illumed the thrilling scene--  
 A silent group of men-at-arms,  
 A guard inured to war's alarms,  
 A captive scout between.

"Your life I give," the leader said,  
 "For a traitor's name, to honor a dead,  
 Who gave you this design?"  
 A flush o'erspread the captive's cheek;  
 "My life is yours, your vengeance wreak,  
 But honor still is mine."

"A soldier I, this dress of gray  
 Proclaims the truth of that I say:  
 This life I hate to yield,  
 But you have asked too great a price;  
 Dishonor ne'er was the device  
 Emblazoned on my shield."

"He chooses death, your orders, men,"  
 The captor grimly said, and then  
 The fateful noose was brought.  
 "Again I offer, soldier, free,  
 Your life if you but name to me  
 The traitor you have bought."

The loop of death was 'round his throat;  
 The captive smiled, nor seemed to note  
 The moments' fleeting speed.  
 "I scorn to buy the life you take  
 At price of faith," 'twas thus he spake;  
 "It were a coward's deed."

With curling lip and flashing eye,  
 His knightly head uplifted high,  
 As though 'twould death defy,  
 He spoke the noblest words e'er penned--  
 "Before these lips betray a friend,  
 I tell you I will die."

From flashing eye the tears now start--  
 Those tears for mother's broken heart.  
 He tears his buttons loose:  
 "I pray you these my mother bear."  
 A moment spared for silent prayer,  
 He dangles at the noose.

That fatal noose is glorified,  
 For thro' its port the deified,  
 Heroic soul did fly.  
 His proudest epitaph, the vain  
 Remorse of him who judged the slain:  
 "Too brave, too brave to die."<sup>12</sup>

The poem which follows was published in April, 1869,  
 and signed by Louise who, it is said, was the sweetheart of  
 Sam Davis:

#### A Tribute

Highest on the head roll of fame,  
 The name of Davis shines as bright  
 As yon stars that luminous flame,

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<sup>12</sup>Ridley, pp. 273-74.

On the sable brow of night!  
 With the undimmed glory radiant,  
 'Twill forever brightly shine,  
 Won from life--to liberty lent--  
 A noble death for truth divine.

No hero of the ancient orient  
 Could such unyielding valor boast,  
 As that boy, whose deeds resplendent  
 Glory won for the cause now lost.  
 Ere life had reached youth's full tide,  
 He left his home and mother dear;  
 With Spartan valor and manly price  
 He grasped his shield--made foeman fear.

When on Pulaski's fatal field  
 He was seized and held a spy--  
 Told he must not the traitor shield,  
 Or most surely he must die!  
 He asked, "How many hours have I?"  
 "Ten minutes more to you remain!"  
 "Tell them no! I can dare to die!  
 I'll not my proud escutcheon stain!"

Homage to his country he did lend--  
 Ne'er cowered in the deadly fight,  
 And died rather than betray a friend,  
 For God, liberty and the right!  
 When life to him was offered as the price  
 Of honor, plighted faith and truth,  
 For another he paid the sacrifice--  
 How bravely died the Southern youth.

Memorial incense shall ever rise  
 From the dust of the martyr's tomb,  
 While honor gilds the deathless prize  
 For glory of his tragic doom!  
 No prouder name among the brave  
 Who died to save their truth--  
 A holocaust on liberty's grave,  
 Offered by that noble Southern youth.

Immortal truth can never die,  
 Although its light awhile may dim,  
 For vice and error it will outvie  
 If faith its vestal fires shall trim!

With silent harps along the strand,  
 Still girt with immortal truth,  
 Downtrodden Tennessee shall stand,  
 And with new reviving youth!<sup>13</sup>

In October, 1892, J. M. King, Jr., of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, made a plea for recognition of Sam Davis. This was delivered before the Erosophian Society of the University of Nashville. Included in this address was a poem by Margaret Preston:

#### A Hero of Heroes

Only a private--who will care  
 When I pass away,  
 Or how, or where I perish, or where  
 I mix with the common clay?  
 They will fill my empty place again  
 With another as bold and brave,  
 And they'll blot me out ere the autumn rain  
 Has freshened my nameless grave.

Only a private--it matters not  
 That I did my duty well,  
 That all through a score of battles I fought.  
 And then, like a soldier fell.  
 The country I died for never will heed  
 My unrequited claim;  
 And history cannot record the deed,  
 For she has never heard my name.

Only a private--and yet I know  
 When I heard the rallying call  
 I was one of the first to go,  
 And I am one of the many who fall.  
 But here as I lie, it is well to feel  
 That my honor's without stain,

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<sup>13</sup>Jeanette King, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, "A Civil War Scrap Book."

That I only fought for our contry's weal,  
And not for glory or gain.

Only a private--yet he who reads  
Through the guises of the heart,  
Looks not at the splendor of the deeds,  
But the way we do our part.  
And when He shall take us by the hand  
And our service own,  
There shall be a glorious band of privates stand  
As victors around the throne.<sup>14</sup>

One of the best known poems dealing with Sam Davis is the one by John Trotwood Moore. For many years this poem was recited at the annual memorial services held at the Sam Davis home.

#### Sam Davis

"Tell me his name, and you are free,"  
The general said, while from the tree  
The grim rope dangled threat'ningly.  
The birds ceased singing--happy birds,  
That sang of home and mother-words.  
That sunshine kissed his cheek--dear sun.  
It loves a life that's just begun!

The very breezes held their breath  
To watch the fight 'twixt life and death.  
But O, how calm and sweet and free  
Smiled back the hills of Tennessee!  
Smiled back the hills as if to say,  
"O, save your life for us today."

"Tell me his name and you are free,"  
The general said, "and I shall see  
You safe within the rebel line--  
I'd love to save such life as thine."  
A tear gleamed down the ranks of blue--  
(The bayonets were tipped with dew),  
Across the rugged cheek of war  
God's angels rolled a teary star.

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<sup>14</sup>King.

The boy looked up--'twas this they heard:  
 "And would you have me break my word?"  
 A tear stood in the general's eye:  
 "My boy, I hate to see thee die--  
 Give me the traitor's name--and fly!"

Young Davis smiled, as calm and free  
 As He who walked on Galilee:  
 "Had I a thousand lives to give,  
 I'd lose them--nay, I'd gladly die  
 Before I'd live one life, a lie!"  
 He turned--for not a soldier stirred--  
 "Your duty, men--I gave my word."

The hills smiled back a farewell smile  
 The breeze sobbed o'er his hair awhile,  
 The birds broke out in sad refrain,  
 The sunbeam kissed his cheek again--  
 When gathering up their blazing bars,  
 They shook his name among the stars.

O, stars, that now his brothers are,  
 O, sun, his sire, in truth and light,  
 Go tell the list'ning worlds afar  
 Of him who died for truth and right!  
 For martyr of all martyrs <sup>he</sup>  
 Who dies to save an enemy.<sup>15</sup>



## CHAPTER IV

### LEGENDS AND STORIES OF CIVIL WAR RUTHERFORD COUNTY

As the smell of powder becomes fainter and the rattle of cannon dies in a fading echo, minds become dimmer and reminiscences come more slowly and less coherently. Stories and legends of the Civil War in Rutherford County are dying with the years. A little while longer and the few published snatches of fact here and there will be all that is left. The following legends and stories have been collected through personal interviews, from scrap books on the Civil War, and from published sources.

Mollie Nelson

There's a well-known story that is recounted when Forrest's raid on Murfreesboro, April 13, 1862, is mentioned. It is a true story because one of the characters still lives in Murfreesboro, virtually on the same spot where the incident occurred, and she will verify its authenticity.

The Yankees had occupied Murfreesboro for a number of months before the great Battle of Stone's River of 1862-63. There were various encampments of soldiers scattered over the town. A large company had pitched their tents on the courthouse lawn. All of the hostilities and some of the

private homes were occupied by officers. Martial law prevailed on the streets. The citizens were subjected to many insults and no service was tendered to anyone unless an Oath of Allegiance to the Union was made. Those who cried out against the unjust acts were imprisoned in the jail or courthouse to await trial.

Today there is a large ornate house on East Main Street about two blocks from the front door of the courthouse. It was built some years after the Civil War by Dr. John Nelson, now deceased. Dr. Nelson's aged wife lives in the house today, a vestige of the harrowing days of 1861-65. During the war she was a young girl, Mollie Nelson, living in a large two-story brick house that sat flush with the brick walk just a few steps in front of the house of today. Her father owned a number of slaves who remained loyal and refused to run away even when the Yankees dominated the town. Included in the group of negroes was a large number of children. Mollie played with these little black slaves constantly. Most of the time they frolicked on the wide brick walk in front of the house. Yankee officers occupied most of the rooms in the back of the house and they commanded the children to stay out of the back yard as they were prone to sleep late and the noise disturbed them.

On the morning of April 13, 1862, Mollie and her playmates failed to converge at their favorite spot for a long time. Early in the morning the populace had been shaken out of their sleep by the crash of firearms and the rattle of horses' hoofs. Bedford Forrest and his cavalry had surprised the Yankee garrison. Molly heard the Yankee officers upstairs rushing around in the haste of dressing themselves. She heard their loud profanity as they condemned Forrest to an ultra-southern clime. Finally they clamored down the stairs and hurried away to assemble their commands.

Firing continued most of the morning. Yankee snipers kept up a sporadic fire from buildings and private houses. Mollie, not realizing the danger of a stray bullet, was interested in joining her little black playmates in front of the house. Collecting her friends and in disobedience to her parents, she assumed the accustomed spot on the brick walk in front of the house. She was having a good time in general in the noise and confusion when a Yankee sniper from a window in the house next door shot point-blank into the midst of the children. It was probable that his aim was directed at a spot farther down the street, but nevertheless the bullet found its mark in the group of children. Mollie was the unlucky victim. The minie ball tore through her throat, crashing out through the jawbone, barely

missing the jugular vein. She screamed and ran into the house leaving a stream of blood in her wake. The family gathered frantically around her. It was evident that the wound was dangerous and would prove fatal if medical aid was not secured. By this time a number of Yankee soldiers had entered the house to witness the excitement. Mollie was now lying on a divan in the hall. A blood soaked cloth was wrapped around her throat. Her father resolved to get a doctor, regardless of the penalty, considering he had not as yet taken an Oath of Allegiance to the Union. As he started to leave the room, one of the soldiers seized him roughly,

"Where you're going?" he demanded.

"I'm going for a doctor. My child is dying."

"Ain't you refused to take the Oath of Allegiance?" asked the soldier.

"Yes."

"Well, you don't go after no doctor."

"But my child will die. She must have medical attention. You damn Yankees are responsible for it."

"Don't make no difference. It'll teach you rebels a lesson. She'll have to get along as best she can."

Then Mollie lingered on for a few days in a wild oblivion. She was at the point of death constantly. Finally, a young officer, one of the occupants of the

Nelson home, broke under the strain and procured a physician. Mollie, after expert medical attention, regained her strength and slowly recovered. Her father, as a result of the incident, was marched to the courthouse and forced to take the Oath of Allegiance.

Mrs. Nelson today enjoys talking about her experience. She has an ugly souvenir of the incident, too. There still remains the livid scar on her neck from a wound that almost left her on the fatal roll of the two battles of Murfreesboro.

Mary Dean Arnold

The Civil War came to an end approximately seventy-five years ago. It is remarkable to discover that fires still burn unabated in the hearts of many. When the stories are recounted there is a quickening of the pulse and a brightening of the eyes. Sometimes the teller will lean forward tensely and a tremble will pass through his body as he utters "the damn Yankees."

Mrs. Hallie Hunt Edwards, of Murfreesboro, whose father was a captain in the Confederate Army, and whose mother went to an early grave as a result of maltreatment from Yankee soldiers, tells with a certain amount of fire stories related to her by her mother.

Her grandfather, Captain Ed Arnold, at the time of the war, lived about one mile east of Murfreesboro on the Woodbury Pike. The old home still stands and is in good condition.

At the time the Federals were occupying Rutherford County, Tennessee, the farmhouses and fields were constant recipients of raids by roving bands of soldiers. Very little, if any, resistance could be offered as most of the able-bodied men were away in the ranks. It was a habit of Captain Arnold to make periodic visits to his home and this the enemy knew. Acting on a false clue, one day a Federal officer drew up his horse in the Arnold yard and fired two rapid shots. In a few moments the house was completely surrounded by "blue coats." Mrs. Arnold gathered her children in the kitchen and awaited the action of the soldiers. In a loud voice the commander of the group demanded that Captain Arnold come out of the house, adding that if he refused they would fire upon the house. Mrs. Arnold answered in a voice without any evidence of fear that he was not in the house.

"You lie," answered the officer and began firing. Unluckily, Mary Dean, the twelve year old daughter, was near the kitchen door that was standing slightly ajar and caught one of the minie balls in her side. She fell to the floor, a large crimson spot forming on her dress.

Mrs. Arnold picked up her daughter and placed her on the bed in the front room. She then ran to a window and raising it with a flourish attacked the soldiers in a vituperative voice.

"You dirty rascals, you've shot my daughter."

The soldier nearest the window answered with a sneer, "A young 'un with the name of Arnold don't deserve any better fare, Madam."

Mrs. Arnold continued, "She'll die without a doctor, die right in that bed she's lying on now. Captain Arnold's not here, but when he does come you will know about it."

One of the soldiers who had been listening, dismounted and with a histrionic bow, said,

"Why Madam, I'm a doctor."

"You'll not touch my daughter," Mrs. Arnold shouted, and she ran to the door to bar it. But the self-imposed doctor, with the rest of the company who refused to miss the fun, pushed open the door and brushed Mrs. Arnold aside. The soldier walked over to the bed where the child was suffering intense pain. He removed a stubby pencil from his coat and with this began probing the wound. In a few minutes the flat minie ball fell out on the floor and the soldier straightened with a triumphant grin on his face.

"Who's been saying I ain't a doctor?"

This twelve year old girl escaped blood poisoning and recovered. Mrs. Edwards says that wound bothered her mother for the remainder of her life and probably caused an early death.

The soldier who fired the ball into the kitchen was termed a "home-made" Yankee, one who resided in the county and joined the Federal Army while it occupied Rutherford County. A number of years later when this same soldier was on his deathbed, he sent word to Captain Arnold that he must see him before he passed away. Captain Arnold refused.

#### Grandma and the Yankee

Grandma Arnold, the mother of Mrs. Hallie Hunt Edwards, carried a bowie-knife strapped around her waist. She was prepared for the worst, for there was no telling when the Yankees would storm into the yard, get off their horses, and start mistreating the children. One day while grandma was bathing Mary Dean's wound, given to her by a dirty Yankee, she heard a loud knocking at the door. Grandma was a little slow about answering the knock and whoever it was hammered so hard that the door almost fell off its hinges. When the door was finally opened, there stood a big Yankee all decked out in blue. He said to grandma,



"Got any meat in there, old lady?"

Grandma asked him what difference that was to him, meanwhile feeling of the big sharp knife at her side. The soldier didn't like grandma's tone, so he walked in, giving her a big push to get her out of the way. That made grandma angry and she thought this was as good a time as any to make a reputation. The soldier didn't examine any of the rooms downstairs but started to the second floor. Grandma pulled out the knife and made for the stairs in a trot. Just about the time grandma got in good striking distance for a jab through the short ribs, the soldier turned just in time. The knife whistled through the air in a wide arc and struck the rail of the stairs. With such terrific force did she swing the knife that when it struck it cut off fully eight inches of the railing. The soldier seeing that grandma was in earnest very quickly found the door and his horse. Grandma could hear his horse beating a tattoo down the road.

#### William Arnold

William Arnold, an uncle of Mrs. Edwards, served as a scout in the war. He was killed by the Yankees near Milton, Tennessee, while asleep under a tree.

One day during the early part of the war, William was scouting around Milton, Tennessee, near the eastern edge

of the county. It was a dangerous undertaking as the scrub cedars and glades were thick with Yankees. Seeing a log house half hidden in the bushes, he stopped and inquired of the occupant, who happened to be an old lady, if any Yankees had been seen in the neighborhood. She replied that the country was thick with them. He had been talking to her only a short time when he heard the clatter of hoofs. The old lady shouted,

"Son, you'd better get in this house quick!"

William ran into the house. In short time his benefactress had him tucked snugly in bed with a lace night cap covering his head. She patted his head and said, "There ain't nothing the matter with you that can't be cured by a little Yankee bumdoozling, daughter."

In a few minutes a number of Yankee horsemen pulled up to the cabin and dismounted. They pushed open the door and walked inside.

"Seen any rebel in these parts?" one of the soldiers asked.

"No," the old lady answered, "been too busy looking after my daughter. She's powerful porely."

The Yankees took one look at the reposing figure and left probably with the feeling that the ailing daughter, because of her size, made a fine hand at shocking corn when she was in better health.

## Two Letters

Mr. J. O. Abernathy of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, has in his possession two letters that were written by his uncle, A. A. Abernathy, during the war. A. A. Abernathy was a resident of Rutherford County, Tennessee, and was killed at the Battle of Stone's River. These two letters give a graphic picture of camp and prison life. The first was written from Bowling Green, Kentucky, and presents a rather whimsical picture of food shortage and camp routine.

Bowling Green, Nov. 15, 1861

Dear Mother:

This day being set apart by our Colonel for washing day, we are therefore excused from drill and I not feeling inclined to wash have reclined beside my box to spend the day in communing with those whom my heart loves to linger near in memory of the past. I am well now and in very good spirits. The health of the company is in tolerable good condition, but of the encampment in general it is not very good. Many are afflicted with the measles, chills and fevers of various kinds. All is quiet today. No contest expected to be witnessed soon between our forces and those of old Abe. Fortification is rapidly going on here. We will soon have the place strong enough to hold it in defiance of all that Abe's clustered crew can do. Our band was increased a few nights ago by fifteen hundred cavalymen. The greater portion of Hardee's command has left this place advancing toward Green River. They may perhaps have a jolification with the Hessians before they return if the flight of them is not directed with too great skill.

Our Quartermaster has obtained 21 waggons for the regiment. The teams are not yet procured though we have the most of them ready for immediate service.

For what intention they have been procured I do not know, perhaps to move us to some place where we may have some work to do in driving the ruthless crew of Lincoln from some place we wish to occupy ourselves. If it is to go where winter quarters may be obtained, I am ready and awaiting for our tents are not very well fortified against hoary frost of winter. Although we have a small chimney in front of our house, and a plenty of comfortable bed clothing for the present. Tell Grandma that the quilt she gave me I find to be a very agreeable companion these frosty nights. Woolen socks are not the less agreeable, I can assure you and also others who have exhibited their kindness in making me presents of the healthy creatures. All of the boys are becoming anxious to leave this place. They say that they have eaten up nearly all of the eatables here, and wish to go to other quarters where provisions can be obtained more easily.

We have drawn baken but once since I returned. Tough beef and tough flour bread without shortening composes our daily meals. We shortened our bread a time or two with the tallow we procured from our beef. The boys say that they have eaten so much beef that they carry upon them the sent of beef, and can almost beat the cows themselves a bellowing. Powder horns will be numerous and cheap in Kentucky next year though the cows and powder may not. There will be many an orphan calf too in Kentucky this winter if I am permitted to judge. And if I am not mistaken some man will find that his faithful yoke of oxen which has served him dilligently for the last thirty-five or forty years has volunteered and been mustered in the service of the Confederate States. But enough on the beef subject for the present. Ma, I sent home by Uncle John some letters in a bundle with Henry's which I wish you would get and place in the back part of my trunk to remain until I come. Write to me soon and let me know the condition of grandma, Mrs. Barker, and all other of my relatives and acquaintances who were laboring under the effects of sickness when I left home and also of those who have since been seized in this manner. Tell Charlie to go see Fannie next Sunday for me and tell her he came to pay the respects to her that I could not possibly pay, on account of departing from the neighborhood sooner that I expected. And also tell her how to direct a letter to Bowling Green. Tell him to make apologies to John Brasheer for me not

complying with my promise. I must now hasten my letter to a close to give it to Henry to hand to a gentleman to drop in the office at Mur.

Yours in love<sup>1</sup>  
A. A. Abernathy

The second letter from A. A. Abernathy to his mother was written while he was in a prison camp in Springfield, Illinois, in August of 1861.

Camp Butler, Springfield, Ill.  
August 10, 1861

Mrs..N. R. Hall,

My dear mother: Communication being opened to Murfreesboro, I deem it a pleasant duty devolving upon me to address you and acquaint you with my present condition as near as it may be prudent to do so. I am in excellent health at present and I may add spirits also. The health and spirits of the prisoners in general is better than I have ever seen since we fell into the hands of our captors. Those who have been languishing upon cots of sickness for months are beginning to stir out and gradually regain their former strength and vigor. And those who have suffered themselves to become despondent and low-spirited are beginning to cherish hopes of a deliverance not far distant. The recent agreements for a general exchange of prisoners they believe will be effectually carried out. All of the prisoners that were at Fort Warren have already been released including Gens. Buckner, Tilgman, and Merkerll and Cols. Brown, Palmer, Hensen. Three thousand prisoners from Fort Delaware have also been released by exchange including both rank and file. If nothing turns up to impede the progress of exchange and no rupture is made of the agreement I hope to be in Dixie by the first of next month. But there is no great certainty it seems in the proceedings and ordinances of the U. S. government for exchange of prisoners has been agreed upon a time or two before

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from A. A. Abernathy, November 16, 1861, to Mrs. N. R. Hall.

this, if the newspapers are reliable. Howsoever, I will not place too much confidence in the arrangements as I learned them from papers, but prepare myself for any emergency. I have already endured six months of confinement liking six days, and I guess I can endure six more equally well if it was imposed upon me and I hope by that time the authorities will begin to look about for peace which our country greatly needs. When you answer this letter please inform me if the following letters have been received, July 10, one to Aunt Martha, one to Aunt Lizzy of the same date, one to grandma of July 8, one to Charlie July 10, and one to yourself and Charlie July 17. Give my best respects to all my friends and relatives and write soon. Tell Charlie to write also. Write me all the news you can hear from C. L. and H. J. Batey and also from Virgil.

Your dutiful son  
A. A. Abernathy<sup>2</sup>

#### Munro Bond on a Furlough

This incident concerning Munro Bond is one of the well-known legends told by veterans of the Civil War and old timers of Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Munro Bond, son of Mr. T. C. Bond, on the Lebanon Pike, had enlisted in the Seventh Tennessee Regiment under the command of Colonel Shephard. When on a furlough it was Munro's habit to conceal his horse in a dense cedar thicket some three hundred yards from the house and sneak in under cover of darkness.

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<sup>2</sup>Letter from A. A. Abernathy, August 10, 1861 to Mrs. N. R. Hall.

On this particular night, which was very dark, he rode into the thicket and hitched his horse. He paused in the darkness a short distance from the house and gave a low whistling sound. In a few moments he heard the bars behind the door lifted and his mother's voice telling him everything was clear.

The Bond home was a one and one-half story structure bisected by a "dog trot." The upper part of the structure at the top of the first story was joined and "boxed-in" forming a small room directly over his parents' room, but that night two young ladies, visitors of his mother, were its occupants. As there was a cot in the smaller room, Bond slept on this. Since he was exhausted from the long ride, he was soon asleep, leaving his uniform and boots scattered over the floor.

Sometime later he was aroused by the loud barking of a dog and soon discovered that the house was surrounded by a small company of Yankees. He heard his mother downstairs talking to the leader who was demanding to search the house.

"We heard there was a damn rebel here and we're going to search the house."

Munro was cut off from escape and his only hope was in concealing himself. There was a long narrow enclosure under the slope of the roof directly behind his room. The two young ladies were awake and entered into his plan of



concealment. He crawled through the small opening in the wall and they quickly hung odds and ends of clothing along the wall on spool-hangers put there in the past. The plan seemed perfect. The opening was obscured from view. The ladies hurried back to their room and went to bed, feigning sleep. There was one thing overlooked and that was Munro's clothing scattered over the floor.

The downstairs rooms had been searched by the Yankees and they were preparing to ascend the stairway. Mrs. Bond, probably aware that her son had concealed himself or was preparing to fight it out, desired to go ahead of the searching party and see what the circumstances were. She explained to the officer that there were two young ladies visiting her and that they were occupying the upstairs rooms. She didn't want them to be frightened out of their wits or be caught in an immodest condition, so she asked that she might be allowed to precede the party by a number of steps. The officer agreed. The first thing that struck her eyes when the lamp rays illuminated the interior was the clothing and boots. Credited with a quick mind, she scooped up the tell tale articles and deposited them under her flowing night nightgown between her legs. When the Yankees came into the room, they discovered the cot.

"There's where he's been sleeping."



Mrs. Bond answered, "One of the girls became frightened and went to bed with the other." Upon examination of the young ladies' room, both of them were found in the same bed. The Yankees, not satisfied but nonplused, soon mounted their horses and rode away.

#### Munro Bond and Professor Pennington

At the beginning of the war Munro Bond was attending Union University. Professor Pennington, one of the instructors of the school, owned a fine pair of mules that he used to pull his carriage to and from school. The one disturbing factor to Munro about this team was their color. One was brown and the other white. Knowing that Professor Pennington was color-blind, Munro decided to remedy the condition by painting the brown mule white, thereby having two white mules instead of one. Professor Pennington did not discover the prank until about two days later. This little episode probably lent impetus to Munro's desire to join the army.

#### Missing at Murfreesboro

The following story concerning the Battle of Stone's River was published in the News Journal on the seventy-fourth anniversary of the battle.

From a Tennessee home went out in the early days of the war a boy soldier, Patrick Bogan Cash, with his old servant Ephraim, to watch over and wait on him. Ephraim was glad to go; he felt that nothing else in life was so important as caring for his young master, and when Judy, his wife, objected to being left behind, he said somewhat severely, "Go 'long, Judy; warn't I jest'd born'd ter tek ker dat chile--Whut yer talkin' 'bout."

Patrick was only sixteen years old, a fair-haired blue-eyed stripling descended from the best of Virginia's patriots who fought and bled in the struggles of the Revolution.

Spotswood, Dandridge, and other historic lines met in his blood and he was courageous as a young lion but tender-hearted as a woman.

He volunteered in the Thirteenth Tennessee Regiment, Confederate, and at last the time for leaving the old home, his mother and the home circle came. The members of the family gathered on the front gallery, then passed out of the gate the youth who was going into the far fields where cruel war was bringing death and destruction to thousands. His horse was pawing impatiently, and a deep silence fell upon the little group.

"Mother," said Patrick, turning back for a last farewell, "I will never surrender, and I will never be taken alive!"

She threw her arms around the boy and kissed him passionately. Then as the old servant bowed low and murmured, "Good-bye, Mistis, Good-bye," she said brokenly, "Ephraim, remember--remember--do not come back without your young master; dead or alive you must bring him back."

"Yes, Mistis," Ephraim said solemnly, "De Laud heppin me, I will."

It was not long before the Thirteenth Tennessee was on the bloody field of Belmont, where many a noble life went out in hand-to-hand encounters. Our young soldier, who with two or three companions had become separated from his company suddenly saw a Federal officer dashing toward him.

The officer as he approached lifted his sword and called quickly, "surrender, boy, surrender!"

"Surrender yourself!" answered the young man as he leveled two revolvers.

The aim was true, and with a momentary shudder the officer fell from the saddle bathed in his own blood. His eyes seemed even in death to be fixed

upon the face of the boy, and the two were so near and the encounter so sudden, that the young fellow dropped upon his knees, crying out his bitter agony, "Oh, I didn't want to kill you; I didn't want to do it, but you wouldn't surrender. Oh, I'm so sorry, so sorry!" and he bent over the prostrate form in a flood of passionate tears.

This then was war. He had killed a human being, one who had never harmed him, nor done him wrong. It was his first actual experience of the "horrors of battle."

Suddenly a part of his command surged by, and one of his friends stopped and knelt by his side. "What are you doing?" cried his comrade; "What is the matter, wounded?"

"Oh, no, but see what I have done; this fine fellow is dead, but I had to do it. He would not surrender!"

A pitying smile passed over the face of the veteran. "Come on! Come on!" he cried, fastening to his side the sword of the Federal officer which was still red with blood. "Come on; there's no time to wait here!"

A week or two later the mother of the boy received by a messenger a package. It contained a beautiful sword, and on the hilt was fastened a slip of paper with this inscription:

"'Twas on that dread immortal day  
I met the Federal band;  
A Colonel drew his sword on me,  
I tore it from his hand."

It was the sword of the young Federal officer, who had been killed by her boy. It had been sent her by a captain in the Thirteenth Tennessee Regiment.

Weeks passed by; the fight of Murfreesboro was on and this regiment was hotly engaged. The fortunes of the South hung in the balance, and the line of fight was wavering, when Lieutenant Dolf Duke sprang forward rallying his men. Just at his side was our young soldier crying, "Come on, boys! Come on!"

Ephraim was not far away. He saw his young master disappear in the smoke and confusion, and heard his clear, ringing voice calling to his comrades, "Come on! Come on!"

At home news of this battle was received with the information that many were wounded, many killed, and some missing. Days passed and the mother waited and waited for news of her boy, but it did not come.

One evening she stood in the twilight on the broad gallery looking into the shadows, listening, watching, waiting. Surely she must hear from him soon, some word or token must come, she thought.

A mysterious feeling crept over her; the feeling of an unseen presence yet there had been no sound save the birds stirring in the vines that quivered near by, and no one was in sight. But thrilling with apprehensive dread she waited, and suddenly a low half-stifled sob reached her ears. Turning she saw dimly, just behind her, kneeling on the floor, a figure rocking to and fro. It was old Ephraim, his face hidden in his hands, which were wet with tears.

A moment there was silence, then she cried hoarsely, "Ephraim, Ephraim, you young master! Where is he?"

"De Lord only knows, Mistis; I done look fur him ev'ry whar; he ain' 'mong de dade an' he ain' 'mong de livin'. I done spen' all dese dayse sence de fight a sarchin' fur him but he done gone--gone. De Laud hab mercy on us! De Laud hab mercy!"

Then a long low wail rent the air--the mother, the faithful old servant together went mourning the loved one they would never see again until the last great day.

Among the missing at Murfreesboro: that was all they every knew. He had said he would never surrender, that he would never be taken alive.

A little later through the influence of Northern friends, every prison where the Confederate soldiers were confined was searched. She thought he might have been captured and imprisoned. The poor mother could not believe him dead, her dear, her beautiful boy, the brave tenderhearted young soldier, but he was never found.

The mother has long ago gone to join him in the land of unbroken peace, but the sword sent her from the battlefield of Belmont is kept as a sacred relic by those who are left of her family circle.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>News Journal, January 1, 1938, p. 1.

## General Thomas Benton Smith

War is often productive of man's baser nature and when this quality is made manifest many suffer inhumanly. The following story is only one incident where passion controlled and destroyed. Although this incident did not occur in Rutherford County, Tennessee, the person involved was a native of that place and spent most of his military career in and around Rutherford County.

General Thomas Benton Smith was born at Mechanicsville, in Rutherford, a few miles from Dewitt Jobe's home. He spend his childhood in company with Jobe, Dee Smith, and others of the neighborhood. When the war began, he enlisted in a company at Triune, Tennessee. Later he was raised from the ranks as Colonel under General Braxton Bragg of the Army of Tennessee. He saw service at the Battle of Stone's River and was wounded in the chest by a minie ball. After recuperating he was with Hood in maneuvers around Nashville. It was in this particular territory that he was ordered by Hood to hold at all costs a very strategic point south of Nashville known as Overton's Hills.

Once ensconced in this position, Smith made ready to meet the enemy. The Yankees, concentrated at the base of the acclivity, formed lines and charged the position. Time after time they were repulsed with terrific losses, but

fresh troops filled the gaps instantly. Finally Smith saw the futility of continuing with the possibility of having his ranks exterminated and ran up the white flag of surrender. The Yankees immediately assumed control of the base and Smith was marched down the incline over a field of dead and dying men. Presently, the guards and prisoner were met by an officer dressed in blue. His eyes flashed cruelly. Without a word he drew his sabre and began striking Smith over the head, cursing wildly. The first stroke cut through the gray hat and at the third stroke the prisoner fell.

Smith was carried to an emergency station but when the medical officer examined his wounds, he shook his head, "Well, you are near the end of your battles for I can see the blood oozing through a gap in your skull." Nevertheless, Smith survived, but never again was he to regain his right mind. After the war he was confined in the State Asylum where he remained thirty years until his death.

The Yankee officer who made the attack on this prisoner was Brigadier-General Winning McMillan of Clark County, Kentucky.

#### Sam Winston and Major Childress

In a book dealing with the early history of Murfreesboro, the following legend surrounding Sam Winston and Major Childress was found:

Sam Winston was quite a popular character in Murfreesboro, and indeed throughout the county. He was a dealer in slaves, then a common business, and was a man of excessive wit and humor. On one occasion Major Jack Childress stood in need of a good strong negro man, and he purchased such a slave from Winston, paying a fancy price for him.

A few days thereafter he met Winston, and at once began to berate him soundly for having sold him a slave that did not measure up to the Major's standard. Winston, with seeming innocence of having practiced any deception, asked Major Childress what objection he had found to the boy. Major Childress replied,

"Why Sam, that negro is so afflicted with an impediment of speech I can't understand his conversation."

"Winston replied, "Major Childress, when you asked me to sell you a good strong boy, I thought you wanted a nigger to work, but had I known that you wanted one to converse with I would have offered another."

Major Childress good humoredly accepted the explanation.<sup>4</sup>

From the same source was found this observation of conditions as they were under Federal control of Murfreesboro:

While the Federals were in control of Murfreesboro in 1862, an order was promulgated forbidding anyone to engage in his business or profession unless he first took the Oath of Allegiance to the United States government. Not a lawyer, doctor, merchant, undertaker, nor a minister of the gospel would subscribe to the oath.

Mr. Winston, meeting a friend on the street of the city, remarked to him,

"The time has come when a man can't get a lawyer to defend his legal rights; a doctor to

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<sup>4</sup>C. C. Henderson, The Story of Murfreesboro (Murfreesboro: News Banner Publishing Co., 1929), pp. 80-81.



protect his health; a druggist to sell him medicine; an undertaker to bury him; nor a preacher to save him from hell."<sup>5</sup>

### The Unknown Soldier

On September 3, 1864, there was found in a corner of the front lawn of the James King home on Salem Pike the body of a young unknown Confederate soldier. The following excerpt is taken from a letter from W. H. King of Harlington, Texas, the only living witness of the discovery of the body and its burial.

It seems that General Williams with his brigade was to make a detour with his command in co-operation with General Wheeler, and meet him in the vicinity of Murfreesboro, and the entire body of Wheeler's command would go back in the Confederate lines. General Wheeler operated around Nashville and Murfreesboro, and along the railroads leading from Nashville, burning bridges, capturing Government stores, supplies wagons and teams. General Wheeler could not tarry long at one place far back in the rear of the Federal Army as the Yankees would mobilize a large force to give him battle or cut him off from a passway out to the Confederate lines. He had to use strategy to evade being intercepted to his discomforture and unnecessary loss to his command. For some unknown cause or delay General Williams didn't arrive in this vicinity until after General Wheeler had gone on. General Williams command arrived and encamped at Barfield, four miles southwest of Murfreesboro, where several thousand soldiers of the Union Army were encamped in the forts on the night of September 3, 1864. The next morning, Sunday, September 3, they took up their march down by Salem,

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<sup>5</sup>Henderson, p. 81.



thence north, crossing Overall's Creek, below the old mill, on the Franklin Road up to Triune, thence southward, going by Eagleville on to Shelbyville where they camped that night (Sunday). There they supplied themselves with clothing. They were enroute to McMinnville the way General Wheeler had gone.

I will return to Sunday morning, September 2, about eight o'clock. To our surprise a squad of men rode into our front yard, where our horses were grazing; catching our horses, unsaddling their poor broken-down horses, and when I saw them, I thought at first they were Yankees, and I was mad. But they said they were Confederates, belonging to General Williams' brigade. I was soon convinced and told them to take the horses and leave their poor ones. I walked on keeping up with them to the Franklin Road, talking to them and looking at the soldiers as they were passing on, and at General Williams. He was a big, fat man, about five feet and seven inches in height, and weighing about two hundred and twenty-five pounds or more. About the time we reached the Franklin Road, I heard a cannon boom. I said, "What's that?" and instantly, I said, "I must go," and went home as fast as I could. Sampson who was holding a horse while a soldier was tacking on shoes, said, calling out to me, "Mars Willie, where you going?" I replied, "I'm going home," but I did not stop. As I passed on, I hear Sampson saying to the soldier, "Massy, Massy, let me go with my young Master." I ran home. Just as I reached the house, Yankees were coming through the back way into the yard. Mother, seeing Sampson and Billy (a negro man, who remained at home during the entire time of the war) coming up the avenue, called to them to come in quickly. The Yankees heard her calling and were very much enraged. They said she was calling the negroes to come to catch them.

As General Williams proceeded up the Franklin Road westward, he reached the southeast corner of my father's Front Woods Lot, fenced and locked with big rails, upon both sides of the road. He ordered his men to lay down every other panel of the fence so they could make a ready passage through in the event the Yankees attacked them. General Williams' command was short of men and he could not afford or risk an attack from the enemy. No attack was made

there; the Yankees had no cannon, the Confederates had two, but the Yankees were in close, and hot pursuit on the heels of the Confederates. To the west about one mile, on a slight rise in the road, the Confederates planted their battery. The Yankees, led by a gallant young Federal officer, Colonel Ives, of the Second Kentucky cavalry, U. S. A., charged and captured it. The Confederates rallied, charged the enemy again, and recaptured the cannon after driving the Yankees back into the woods.

In this charge the unknown soldier was killed, and found dead near the "Dry Branch," as the small stream-bed was called. The soldier's pockets were turned wrong side out with nothing in them, or papers or letters to identify him. I don't recollect where he was shot, except it was not in the head or face.

Near where the soldier was lying was a beautiful chestnut sorrel mare, lying dead, killed in the fight, and probably it was his horse, and in the pursuit and charge of the Yankees this horse was killed, dashing its rider with force, killed the rider, the soldier. This thought has just occurred to me as I cannot recall seeing any place where he was shot. However, this is only a surmise, and not stated fact.

Mr. Alex Smith, who ran a contraband farm, that is, negroes working for cotton, had a dozen or more negroes working for him. He took three or four negro men with hoes and shovels, and we went down where the dead soldier was lying and brought him up to the northeast corner of our field. Mr. Sutton, who lived near Bellbuckle, Mr. Hick's son-in-law was present, also, Mr. Hicks. I proposed that we go to our mill and get some planks and make a coffin to put the soldier in for burial. I was but a boy and this was not considered. The negroes dug a hole about three and one half feet deep; the soldier was wrapped in his blanket and was put in the hole in the corner of the fence. The grave was on the north side of the road in the southwest corner of my father's farm.

Before he was buried, a Confederate soldier, well armed, came riding leisurely by, on the Road going west. He rode up to the soldier's feet, and while he was looking at the dead soldier, I asked him if he knew him. He said he did not know him, but thought he belonged to the Ninth Kentucky

Cavalry. This is as near his identity as I know. I requested him to inquire of the regiment about the missing and let it be known of his death.<sup>6</sup>

#### A Rendezvous in Spence Hotel

During Forrest's raid on Murfreesboro every building, hotel, or the like that might possibly harbor a Yankee was searched. The proprietor at the old Spence Hotel told the raiders that a Yankee officer was occupying a certain room on the second floor. The Confederates stormed up the stairs to the room and demanded that the door be opened. Presently a woman opened the door and said she was the sole occupant of the room. They discovered that the mattress had an unusual hump in the middle and they immediately surmised the cause of it. Two soldiers pierced the mattress at different places with their bayonets and were met by howls of pain. They threw back the covering and discovered the Yankee officer who was only too willing to go as a prisoner. The surprised officer was Provost-Marshall Rounds who had subjected the citizens of Murfreesboro to many inhumanities. He was unceremoniously marched out of the hotel and down the street in view of a large number of people lining the streets. His

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<sup>6</sup>Letter from W. H. King, Harlington, Texas, April 15, 1932.

embarrassment was heightened by the fact that his attire was not what a gentleman usually wore at that time of the day. Forrest's men carried the humiliated Yankee around the square amid the jeers of the people on the streets.

The following group of legends surrounding the Civil War in Rutherford County was found in Annals of the Army of the Cumberland by John Fitch.

#### Rousseau or a Rabbit

Much sport usually ensued in the camps about Murfreesboro, last spring, when a rabbit, of which there were many, would be started. There is generally much cheering, and excitement, too, when Major-General Rousseau, who is universally popular, a splendid horseman, and always elegantly mounted, rides about the camp. Upon hearing a prodigious shout one evening, near by his headquarters, General Jefferson C. Davis inquired the cause.

"I can't say exactly, general," replied his aide, after stepping to the tent door, "but I think it's the boys either after General Rousseau or a rabbit."<sup>7</sup>

#### A Practical Camp Joke

The soldier in his best estate is full of fun. In a tent in the camp of the Eleventh Indiana Battery, near Murfreesborough, in the absence of chairs, a rude bench had been constructed by placing a board upon cross-legs. The board was soon found too limber to bear up the crowd which daily enjoyed

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<sup>7</sup> John Fitch, Annals of the Army of the Cumberland (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1864), p. 674.

its comforts, and was, in consequence, strengthened by laying another thick plank over it. A roguish sergeant one day removed this top plank, bored a number of auger-holes nearly through the bottom board, and filled them with powder. He laid a train from one to another, prepared his fuse, and then replaced the plank. Shortly after, the bench, as usual, was filled with his unsuspecting comrades--when he reached down and touched the fuse with his lighted cigar. Of course there was an explosion just about that time, which hoisted the party, as would a petard, upsetting the stove and tent furniture, knocking down the tent, and enveloping all in smoke and dire confusion.<sup>8</sup>

#### Bragg and His Private

While Bragg's troops were on their retreat from Murfreesboro, ragged, hungry, and weary, they straggled along the road for miles, with an eye to their own comfort, but a most unmilitary neglect of rules and regulations. Presently one of them espied, in the woods near by, a miserable broken-down mule, which he at once seized and preceeded to put to his use, by improvising, from stray bits of rope, a halter and stirrups. This done, he mounted with grim satisfaction, and pursued his way. He was a wild Texas tatterdemalion, bareheaded, barefooted, and wore in lieu of a coat a rust-looking hunting-shirt. With hair unkempt, beard unshorn, and face unwashed, his appearance was grotesque enough; but, to add to it, he drew from some receptacle his corn-cob pipe, and made perfect his happiness by indulging in a comfortable smoke.

While thus sauntering along, a company of bestarred and bespangled horsemen--General Bragg and his staff--rode up, and were about to pass on, when the rather unusual appearance of the man attracted their notice. The object of their attention, however, apparently neither knew or cared to know them,

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<sup>8</sup>Fitch, p. 661.

but looked and smoked ahead with careless indifference.

"Who are you?" asked the major-general.

"Nobody," was the answer.

"Where did you come from?"

"Nowhere."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"Where do you belong?"

"Don't belong anywhere."

"Don't you belong to Bragg's army?"

"Bragg's army! Bragg's army!" replied the chap. "Why, he's got no army! One half of it he shot in Kentucky, and the other half has just been whipped to death at Murfreesboro."

Bragg asked no more questions, but turned and spurred away.<sup>9</sup>

#### Life a Drag

Long after midnight, perhaps two o'clock in the morning, while in camp at Murfreesboro, the author was at General Rosecran's headquarters, when there seemed to be a momentary cessation of business and conversation in his room. The general leaned back in his chair, shaded the light from his face with one hand, and not only looked, but seemed to feel himself the picture of weariness.

"General, you are leading a hard life," we remarked. He answered gently,

"Yes, rather hard, and if this life were all, it would be a wretched drag."<sup>10</sup>

#### A Rebel "Pow-wow" Denied

A day or two after the battle of Stone's River, and while burial-parties were yet busy upon the

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<sup>9</sup>Fitch, p. 653.

<sup>10</sup>Fitch, p. 650.

field, a minister of the gospel, of secession proclivities, applied to the general commanding at Murfreesborough for permission to take the body of the rebel General James Rains to Nashville, his former home, for burial. General Rosecrans, alive to the courtesies of military life, readily consented, when it was intimated to him that the secessionists of Nashville were intending to make the funeral a rebel ovation. The idea stung him. Turning to the applicant in his earnest, brusque manner, he remarked,

"I wish it to be distinctly understood that there is to be no fuss made over this affair, none at all, sir. I won't permit it, sir, in the face of this bleeding army. My own officers are here, dead and unburied, and the bodies of my brave soldiers are yet on the field, among the rocks and the cedars. You may have the corpses, sir; but remember distinctly that you can't have an infernal secession 'pow-wow' over it in Nashville."<sup>11</sup>

#### Girls' Wit

Upon going to the tent of the headquarters' photographer, at Murfreesborough, Tennessee, recently to have his manly countenance painted by the sunbeams, Brigadier-General Garfield, Chief of Staff, found there a bevy of rebel girls. As he entered, with a number of military friends, they hastily left the premises. Passing out of the door, one of the girls slyly remarked,

"Let John Morgan come in here, and he'll take that Yankee general much quicker than the camera can."<sup>12</sup>

#### A Soldier Tells of the Battle

"You say you can't understand about army wings, they being crushed, falling back, and so on. Well, here it is in short. Suppose our army to be like a

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<sup>11</sup>Fitch, pp. 657-58.

<sup>12</sup>Fitch, p. 655.



bird at Stone River, head toward Murfreesborough, its body, Thomas' corps, being the center, McCook's corps, the right wing, spread wide open, and Crittenden's corps, thus spread, the left wing. That will do well enough for illustration. Well, Bragg's army piles in on McCook's wing, at its tip, and breaks off an inch or so by capturing batteries and several hundred of our men. And the feathers fly mightily all along that wing, until it laps right up 'longside the center. That's the way it was done. But they didn't move our head nor center, though--nary! Well, the rob cavalry, of which they had a powerful slue during the fight, came round on our rear on the big Nashville road, where were hundreds of wagons and ambulances. There we will say, is the bird's tail; and the supply-wagons, and the doctor's tools, and the niggers, we'll call them the tail feathers. Now then feathers flew some, you'd better believe."<sup>13</sup>

#### A Dodge for a Pass

Our general has ordered that officers' and soldiers' wives shall stay at home, or, at least, advises them that they had better not come out to the army at Murfreesborough. There are no hotels, no nice eatables, and none of the comforts of life. On the contrary, many ugly sights and smells will be encountered and, on the whole, home will be a much more agreeable place. Hence the dear ladies can get no passes to come--sad fact--but very necessary denial.

But an officer's wife is very shrewd. If she can circumvent the epaulet and shoulder-straps, 'tis done; and she takes not a little delight in the operation. One of them recently telegraphed from Louisville to General Garfield, Chief of the Staff, that her husband, an artillery officer, was very sick--perhaps dying--and that she must see him,

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<sup>13</sup>Fitch, p. 675.



and requested the general to authorize the issuing to her of a pass to Murfreesborough. The general's heart was touched; but, knowing nothing of the matter, he referred it to Colonel Barnett, Chief of Artillery. The Colonel, too, sympathized with the distressed wife, and kindly sent an orderly out to the husband's battery to inquire into his condition, that the devoted wife might be advised thereof. Speedily the husband himself came in with astonishment depicted on his face. Something's the matter, somewhere or somehow, he doesn't exactly know what.

"How do you do?" asks the Artillery Chief.

"First-rate, sir."

"Where have you been of late?"

"At my battery, on duty."

"Have you been sick, lately?"

"No indeed; never had better health in my life."

"Quite sure of it, are you?"

"Of course I am."

"You have been on duty all the time? Haven't you been absent from your command at all?"

"Not a day."

"Perfectly well, now--no consumption, fever, liver-complaint, spleen, or Tennessee quickstep?"

"Certainly not. Why do you ask?"

In reply to this query the telegram of his anxious wife was handed to him. He read it, looked down and pondered for a moment in silent wonder at the ingenuity of woman, then called for a bottle of wine, and a general "smile" circulated among the bystanders. The loving wife was informed by telegraph that her husband was in no danger, in fact was doing remarkably well.<sup>14</sup>

#### A Brave Boy in Battle

During the battle of Friday, at Stone River, General Rousseau rode up to Loomis's battery, and saw there a youth of the battery holding horses, and in the midst of a very tempest of shot and shell. He was so unconscious of fear and so elated and excited, that, being barred from better occupation than holding horses, his high spirits found vent in shouting out songs and dancing to the music. The

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<sup>14</sup>Fitch, pp. 666-67.

general was so pleased with his whole deportment that he rode up to him and said,

"Well done, my brave boy! Let me shake hands with you."

A few days after the fight, General Rousseau visited the camp of the battery, and, mentioning the circumstances to the commanding officer, expressed a desire to see the youth again.

"Step out, McIntire," said the officer. The general again commended his conduct, and said, "I shook hands with you on the battlefield; and now I wish to do it again, in the presence of your brother soldiers. May you carry the same brave spirit through the war, and come out safely at last, as you are sure to come out honorably." The general then shook his hand warmly, in the presence of his officers and of his companions.<sup>15</sup>

#### Forrest and a Lady

It is said that the following incident occurred while Forrest was reviewing his troops on the public square at Murfreesboro after the victorious **raid on the Federal** garrison.

A charming lady arrayed in long flowing skirts accosted the dashing cavalry leader rapturously and asked him if he would back his horse. In a very gallant manner Forrest obliged her, his horse pawing in the dust of the street. The lady then bent down where the horse had stirred the dirt, spread a <sup>f</sup><sub>i</sub> fine lace handkerchief on the ground, and poured a small handful of the dirt into it. She then folded the edges and walked triumphantly away carrying the little bag as if it contained fine jewels.

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<sup>15</sup>Fitch, p. 673.

## A Civil War Wedding

One of the most romantic weddings of Murfreesboro during Civil War days was that of the marriage of Mattie Ready to Colonel John Morgan, the famous Confederate raider.

According to the story, Mattie Ready, a native of Confederate Murfreesboro, was visiting friends in the Yankee town of Knoxville one spring early in the war. As local tradition has her Miss Ready was beautiful, and she is also described as being very independent and full of spirit.

On her way to Knoxville, as she rode along a Yankee controlled road, she sang the song of the Morgan raiders and would not halt even when halted by a Yankee patrol. Contrary to popular opinion of the time, the Yankees proved to be gentlemen in the face of the taunts Miss Ready unleashed in the course of the conversation. The meeting terminated when the soldiers asked Miss Ready her name and she replied:

"My name is Mattie Ready now, but by the grace of God, one day I hope to call myself the wife of John Morgan."

That seemed to be the last word in the matter, so the Yankees muchly amused, and no doubt, muchly relieved, let her go and she continued on her way singing the raiders' song.

About a month later, Colonel Morgan was returning from one of his raids, and by accident overheard the two Yankee patrolmen, who had stopped Mattie Ready, recount the tale of meeting her and what she said about her intentions on the state of single blessedness of Morgan.

Man's vanity was helpless against this invitation and Morgan needs must see Miss Ready, and then having seen her, he needs must marry her, and Miss Ready being nothing loath, the affair was settled with dispatch--but with no abandon as plans were made for a big wedding in Murfreesboro.

The wedding took place in the old Wendel home across the street from where the Presbyterian Church is today. This gala event took place in December before the battle of Murfreesboro, destined for the coming New Year's Day.

The wedding was attended by none less than President Davis, and Generals Bragg, Hardee, Cheatham, and Polk, who as Bishop performed the ceremony with "his booted feet showing strangely beneath his bishop's robes."<sup>16</sup>

### An Escape

The following account taken from B. L. Ridley's Journal gives an interesting story of the escape of two Confederate prisoners:

One day three of Forrest's cavalry and one of Forrest's scouts were captured in an attempt to tear up the railroad at Wartrace, and placed in a fort at Murfreesboro, together with about one hundred prisoners that were picked up after the battle of Franklin. It soon became noised that these men were to be shot as bushwhackers. General Forrest informed General Rousseau that those men were his regular soldiers, and that if he shot them it would be at his peril. The names of the soldiers were sent in, but the scout and Bone Rouss (who had killed a Federal detective), were not mentioned in the list. A pall of sorrow came over the prisoners in the fort when General Rousseau, in withdrawing charges against Forrest's men, left out the scout and Bose Rouss, who had no known identity with any command, but who were known by the prisoners to be true and tried soldiers. A court martial was ordered to try them, and they were sentenced to be shot the next morning at ten o'clock.

That night was dark and freezing. The one hundred formed a circle and covered the center from the guards, when the two prisoners went to work to cut out. The noise of the tramping circle drowned the din of the working victims, and at about three o'clock in the morning they made their escape. They struck across the railroad and passed the hand-car house. One of them had been a railroader,

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<sup>16</sup>The William Lytle Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, "A Civil War Scrap Book."

and he said, "Let's get the corporal hand-car, strike right down the railroad, and run through Rousseau's pickets." The idea was adopted. They got the car out when along came two railroad negroes dressed in blue. The desperate men took the negroes in, placed them at the lever, and told them to pull for dear life, and that if they gave warning by sign or action they would cut their throats from ear to ear. Flying with electric speed the hand-car approached the outpost pickets, who were stationed on a down grade. Day was breaking and the outposts, four in number, stood upon the road and called out, "Halt!" The scout waved to them a paper in his hand, and as he came near threw it to them, saying, "These are my orders. The Rebs are about to get a broken-down caisson between the lines, and we are ordered not to stop." The guards picked the paper up. It worked like a charm. They turned for a moment, as if starting to the campfire to read it. All at once they discovered the sell. Overcome in confusion, they fired in the distance random shots at the Corporal's pilots who had quickly passed out of range. In the desperate attempt they had met death, avoided it, and the picket lines passed safely, they passed triumphantly into the presence of Forrest and their comrades.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> B. S. Ridley, Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing & Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 511-12.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to bring together the legends and stories about Dewitt Smith Jobe and other Civil War patriots of Rutherford County, Tennessee, and to preserve the rapidly disappearing legends and stories of the Civil War period in Rutherford County, both military and civil.

There have been a number of citations from published sources since the field of oral legends and oral stories has been narrowed by the years. This exigency brought about the investigator's attempt to present a representative picture of the dramatic happenings in Rutherford County during the Civil War.

The first chapter gave a general history of the county and its military history during the Civil War. The second chapter dealt with Dewitt Jobe, his family and his military career. This investigation of the life of Jobe proved fascinating. The investigator feels fully convinced that Jobe deserves the same recognition of honor as has been accorded Sam Davis. Yet, Jobe's dust lies hidden under weeds and underbrush in an out-of-way, obscure burying ground.

The third chapter dealt with other patriots of Rutherford County, namely; Dee Smith, John Bowman, and

Sam Davis. The third and last chapter gave a collection of legends from both oral and published sources.

Rutherford County has appreciably kept abreast of time. As surely as the plowshare turns under the minie ball on the battle field, so surely progress is rapidly obscuring the few fragments of Civil War legends. The preservation of what remains has been the purpose of this study.

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